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THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

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THE

LIGHT OF THE WORLD

OR

THE GREAT CONSUMMATION

BY

SIR EDWIN ARNOLD, K.C.I.E., C.S.I.
AUTHOR OF "THE LIGHT OF ASIA," ETC.

43695

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43695

Dedicated

TO

THE QUEEN'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY

Proeme.

THE SOVEREIGN VOICE SPAKE, ONCE MORE, IN MINE EAR:
"WRITE, NOW, A SONG UNSTAINED BY ANY TEAR!"

"WHAT SHALL I WRITE?" I SAID: THE VOICE REPLIED:
"*WRITE WHAT WE TELL THEE OF THE CRUCIFIED!*"

"HOW SHALL I WRITE," I SAID, "WHO AM NOT MEET
ONE WORD OF THAT SWEET SPEAKING TO REPEAT?"

"IT SHALL BE GIVEN UNTO THEE! DO THIS THING!"
ANSWERED THE VOICE: "WASH THY LIPS CLEAN, AND SING!"

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The Light of the World.

AT BETHLEHEM.

So many hills arising, green and grey,
On Earth's large round; and that one hill to say:
"I was His bearing-place!" On Earth's wide breast
So many maids! and She—of all most blest—
Heavily mounting Bethlehem—to be
His Mother! Holy Maid of Galilee!
Hill, with the olives and the little town!
If rivers from their crystal founts flow down,
If 'twas the Dawn which did Day's gold unbar,
Ye were beginnings of the best we are,
The most we see, the highest that we know,
The lifting heavenward of Man's life below.

Therefore, though better lips ye shall not lack,
Suffer, if one of modern mood steals back—
Weary and wayworn, from the Desert-road
Of barren Thought; from Hope's Dead Sea which glowed
With's Love's fair mirage; from the Poet's haunt,
The Scholar's lamp, the Statesman's scheme, the vaunt,
The failure, of all fond Philosophies,—
Back unto Thee, back to thy olive-trees,
Thy people, and thy story, and thy Son,
Mary of Nazareth! so long agone
Bearing us Him Who made our Christendom,
And came to save the Earth, from Heav'n, His home.

So many hill-sides, crowned with rugged rocks!
So many simple shepherds keeping flocks
In many moonlit fields! but, only they—
So lone, so long ago, so far away—
On that one winter's night, at Bethlehem,

To have white Angels singing lauds for them!
They—only hinds wrapped in the he-goat's skin—
To hear Heaven's music, bidding Peace begin!
Only for those, of countless watching eyes,
The "Glory of the Lord" glad to arise;
The skies to blaze with gold and silver light
Of seraphs, by strong joy flashed into sight;
The wind, for them, with that strange song to swell,—
By too much happiness incredible.—
That tender Anthem of good times to be
Then at their dawn—not daylight yet, ah me!
"Peace upon Earth! Goodwill!" sung to the strings
Of lutes celestial. Nay, if these things
Too blessëd to believe have seemed, or seem,
Not ours the fault, dear Angels! Prove the dream
Waking and true! sing once again, and make
Moonlight and starlight sweet for Earth's sad sake!
Or, if Heaven bids ye lock in silence still
Conquest of Peace, and coming of Goodwill,

Till times to be, then—oh, you placid sheep!
Ah, thrice-blest shepherds! suffer if we creep
Back through the tangled thicket of the years
To graze in your fair flock, to strain our ears
With listening herdsmen, if, perchance, one note
Of such high singing in the fine air float;
If any rock thrills yet with that great strain
We did not hear, and shall not hear, again;
If any olive-leaf at Bethlehem
Lisps still one syllable vouchsafed to them;
If some stream, conscious still—some breeze—be stirred
With echo of th' immortal words ye heard.

What was it that ye heard? the wind of Night
Playing in cheating tones, with touches light,
Amid the palm-plumes? Or, one stop outblown
Of planetary music, so far-flown
Earthwards, that to those innocent ears 'twas brought
Which bent the mighty measure to their thought?

Or, haply, from breast-shaped Beth-Haccarem,
The hill of Herod, some waft sent to them
Of storming drums and trumps, at festival
Held in the Idumæan's purple hall?
Or, it may be, some Aramaic song
Of country lovers, after parting long
Meeting anew, with much "goodwill," indeed,
Blown by some swain upon his Jordan reed?
Nay, nay! your abbas back ye did not fling,
From each astonished ear, for swains to sing
Their village-verses clear; for sounds well-known
Of wandering breeze, or whispering trees, or tone
Of Herod's trumpets. And ye did not gaze
Heart-startled on the stars (albeit the rays
Of that lone orb shot, sparkling, from the East
Unseen before); for these, largest and least,
Were fold-lamps, lighted nightly: and ye knew
Far differing glory in the Night's dark blue
Suddenly lit with rose, and pierced with spike

Of golden spear beam. Oh, a dream, belike!
Some far-fetched Vision, new to peasant's sleep
Of Paradise stripped bare!—But, why thus keep
Secrets for them? This bar, which doth enclose
Better and nobler souls, why burst for those
Who supped on the parched pulse, and lapped the stream,
And each, at the same hour, dreams the same dream!
Or, easier still, they lied! Yet, wherefore, then
"Rise, and go up to Bethlehem," and unpen
To wolf and jackal all their hapless fold
So they might "see these things which had been told
In Heaven's own Voice?" And Heaven, whate'er betide,
Spreads surely somewhere, on Death's farther side!
This sphere obscure, viewed with dim eyes to match,
This earthly span—gross, brief—wherein we snatch,
Rarely and faintly, glimpses of Times past
Which have been boundless, and of Times to last
Beyond them timelessly; how should such be

All to be seen, all we were made to see?
This flesh fallacious, binding us, indeed,
To sense, and yet so largely leaving freed
That we do know things are we cannot know,
And high and higher on Thought's stairways go
Till each last round leads to some sudden steep
Where Reason swims, and falters; or must leap
Headlong, perforce, into the Infinite,
How should we say outside this shines no light
Of lovelier scenes unseen; of lives which spread
Pleasant and unexpected for the Dead,
As our World, opening to the Babe's wide eyes
New from the Womb, and full of birth's surprise?
How should this prove the All, the Last, the First?
Why shall no inner, under, splendours burst
Once—twice—the Veil? Why put a marvel by
Because too rich with hope? Why quite deny
The Heavenly story, lest our doubtful hearts—
Which mark the stars, and take them for bright parts

Of boundless Being, ships of life that sail
In glittering argosies—without a tale,
Without a term—or, of that shoreless Sea,
The scattered silver Islets, drifting free
To destinies unmeasured—see, too, there
By help of dead believing eyes, which were,
The peoples of the stars; and listen, meek,
To those vast voices of the stars, which speak—
If ever they shall speak—in each man's tongue?

And, truly, if Joy's music once hath rung
From lips of bands invisible, if any—
Be they the Dead, or of the Deathless Many—
Love and serve Man, angelical Befrienders,
Glad of his weal, and from his woe Defenders,—
If such, in Heaven, have pity on our tears,
Forever falling with the unmending years,
High cause had they at Bethlehem, that night
To lift the curtain of Hope's hidden light,

To break decree of silence with Love's cry,
Foreseeing how this Babe, born lowlily,
Should—past dispute, since now achieved is this—
Bring Earth great gifts of blessing and of bliss;
Date, from that crib, the Dynasty of Love;
Strip his misusëd thunderbolts from Jove;
Bend to their knees Rome's Cæsars; break the chain
From the slave's neck; set sick hearts free again,
Bitterly bound by priests, and scribes, and scrolls;
And heal with balm of pardon, sinking souls;
Should Mercy to her vacant throne restore,
Teach Right to Kings, and Patience to the Poor;
Should by His sweet name all names overthrow,
And by His lovely words, the quick seeds sow
Of golden equities, and brotherhood,
Of Pity, Peace, and gentle praise of good;
Of knightly honour, holding life in trust
For God, and Lord, and all things pure and just;
Lowly to Woman; for Maid Mary's sake

Lifting our sister from the dust, to take
In homes her equal place, the Household's Queen,
Crowned and august who sport and thrall had been!
Of arts adorning life, of Charities
Gracious and wide, because the impartial skies
Roof one race in; and poor, weak, mean, oppressed,
Are children of one bounteous Mother's breast,
One Father's care emancipating man,
Should, from that bearing-cave, outside the Khân,
Amid the kneeling cattle, rise, and be
Light of all lands, and splendour of each sea,
The Sun-burst of a new Morn come to Earth,
Not yet, alas! broad Day, but Day's white birth
Which promiseth; and blesseth, promising.
These from that Night! What cause of wondering
If that one Silence of all Silences
Brake into Music? if, for hopes like these
Angels, who love us, sang that song, and show
Of Time's far purpose made the "great light" glow?

Wherefore, let whosoever will drink dry
His cup of Faith; and think that, verily,
Not in a vision, no way otherwise
Than those poor shepherds told, there did arise
This portent. Being amidst their sheep and goats,
Lapped careless in their pasture-keeping coats,
Blind as their drowsy beasts to what drew nigh,
(Such the lulled ear, and such the unbusied eye
Which ofttimes hears and sees hid things!) there spread
The "glory of the Lord" around each head,
A light not moon-glow, nor the grey of Night
Nor lightning-flash, nor lit like any light
By earthly orbs beheld, but fetched from beam
Of that concentral Sun whereby Suns gleam,
Which kindles spheres, and has for dusk full Noon,
Shining behind the Blue, past Sun and Moon,
And making hyaline of æther clear
Where, with new eyes, souls—free of Death and Fear—
In range incomprehensible, and ray

Of limitless illuming, see alway
Authentic Being; outside Life's close bars,
By Life's light blotted, as at noon the stars.
Such sight spreads bright behind that blindness here
Which men name "seeing;" and such Heav'n-Dawn dear
(As it had reason by such Day to follow!)
Broke, be it deemed, o'er hill and over hollow,
On the inner seeing, the sense concealed, unknown,
Of those plain hinds—glad, humble, and alone—
Flooding their minds, filling their hearts; around,
Above, below, disclosing grove and ground,
The rocks, the hill, the town, the solitude,
The wondering flocks,—a-gaze with grass half-chewed,—
The palm-crowns, and the path to Bethlehem,
As sight angelic spies. And, came to them
The "Angel of the Lord," visible, sure,
Known for the Angel by his presence pure
Whereon was written Love, and Peace, and Grace,
With beauty passing mortal mien and face,

His form declaring him. We should not seek,—
As they, too, sought not,—any voice to speak
The titles of the Chief of those who stand
Ruling our Planet, for th' encircling Hand
Which scatters suns and stars athwart the Blue
As sowers fling the seed. We should know, too,
The great and tender eyes, sad with our sinning,
Glad when we strive aright, 'ware of Beginning,
And ending, and the Reasons, and the Path;
That gracious, potent, Friend who wisdom hath
Of whence all come, and whereunto all go;
(He, in Gethsemane, did see him so!)
The embodied, blinding, loveliness of all
Which, of Earth's dearest Dead, our hearts recall,
To perfectness transfigured and combined,
In heavenly type of utmost Humankind.
Not robed, not sandalled, as the painters limn,
But past all dreams, till we wake, seeing him;
And, then, as natural, as dear, as known

As to the Babe its Mother's brows bent down.
Wingless; for where these live there blows no wind,
Nor aught spreads, gross as air, nor any kind
Of substance, whereby spirits' march is stopped;
Nothing so heavy as the snow-flower dropped
Feather-like on the wild swan's feather; or dip
Of swallow in the streamlet; or Love's lip
Kissing her Dead. Oh, certes! not of men,
Yet, blending form with spirit; nay, and then,
Supreme, majestical! for terror fell—
With worship,—on their hearts, the writings tell;
So that the Angel of the Earth had need
To comfort them, speaking these words, indeed:

"FEAR NOT! FOR BEHOLD I BRING YOU GOOD TIDINGS OF GREAT JOY, WHICH SHALL BE TO ALL PEOPLE."

"FOR UNTO YOU IS BORN THIS DAY IN THE CITY OF DAVID, A SAVIOUR, WHICH IS CHRIST THE LORD."

"AND THIS THE SIGN UNTO YOU! YE SHALL FIND THE BABE WRAPPED IN SWADDLING CLOTHES, LYING IN A MANGER."

Might he not speak so, if, in truth, we heard
Our Angel, and the Lord's; with simple word
Easy and sweet, as to her little son
A nursing mother; or—when Night is done—
Dawn's soft breath whispering plain: "Lo! I am
Day!"
But, of those things which the Bright One did say,
So high, so new, so glad, so comforting,
"Good tidings of great joy to you I bring!"
The echo, not the meaning of his speech
Lives; and men tell it sadly, each to each,
With lips, not hearts; sadly, from tongue to tongue,
The Ages, unpersuaded, pass along
The dulcet message, like a dream bygone
Which was for happy sleepers, but is flown.

We bleed, and hate, and suffer, and are blind,
Uncomprehending; yet, if one will mind,
That light is shining still on Life's far side;
And the Apostle, and Heaven's Angel, lied;
Or else, from Heaven that night th' Evangel fell:
"Beginnings of the Golden Times we tell!"
Now is the New Law opened! Mary's Son
Hath opened it, and, when full years are run,
Peace shall be, and Goodwill, and Mercy shed
Over all flesh and spirit, quick and dead!
The Consummation comes, the purposed Bliss;
Earth was for Now; her glad days spring from this!

Nor only that one Angel (if we dare
Receive) for "suddenly was with him there
A multitude of heavenly ones," who throng.
The silvery gleam, all singing that same song
Of Peace and Love; all—for our Planet's sake—
Praising ELOI.

('Tis the Name He spake
In th' Aramaic, at His Mother's knee,
In white-walled Nazareth of Galilee,
Lisping first speech; and after, on His Cross;
But we have sore-misused, to all men's loss,
The great word "God," speaking th' Unspeakable
With daily lips, and doing nowise well
To give thereby parts, passions, qualities
To the All-Being, Who hath none of these;
Mingling weak mortal thoughts of "Sire" and "King"
In "God the Father;" and, so worshipping
An idol served with muttered spell and moan,
Baser than brass, and duller than dead stone;
A graven image of that Glorious All
Who hath no form, and Whom His Angels call
By never-uttered names, and Whom to see
Not once hath been, and never once shall be:
Who doth, in universal rule, possess
Majesty, beauty, love, delightfulness;

The Omnipresent, Conscious, Joy. 'Twere well,—
If name must be—with Mary's Son to spell
This unspoiled Word, mystical, free of dread,
Ancient and hallowed; and by those lips said
Which knew its meaning most, and called "God" so,
"ELOI" in the Highest.)

Heaven a-glow!

And the mild burden of its minstrelsy:

PEACE BEGINNING TO BE,
DEEP AS THE SLEEP OF THE SEA
WHEN THE STARS THEIR FACES GLASS
IN ITS BLUE TRANQUILLITY;
HEARTS OF MEN UPON EARTH,
FROM THE FIRST TO THE SECOND BIRTH,
TO REST AS THE WILD WATERS REST
WITH THE COLOURS OF HEAVEN ON THEIR BREAST.

LOVE, WHICH IS SUNLIGHT OF PEACE,
AGE BY AGE TO INCREASE,

TILL ANGER AND HATE ARE DEAD
AND SORROW AND DEATH SHALL CEASE;
"PEACE ON EARTH AND GOODWILL!"
SOULS THAT ARE GENTLE AND STILL
HEAR THE FIRST MUSIC OF THIS
FAR-OFF, INFINITE BLISS!

So—or in such wise—those rude shepherds heard
The Angels singing clear; when, not one word
Wiser ones caught that night—solemn and still—
Of their high errand: "PEACE! GOODWILL! GOODWILL!"

Ah! think we listened there,
With opened heart and ear,
And heard, in truth, as these men say they heard,
On flock, and rock, and tree
Raining such melody;
Heaven's love descending in that loveliest word;

"PEACE!" Not at first! not yet!
Our Earth had to forget
Burden of birth, and travail of slow years;
But now the dark time done!
Daylight at length begun!
First gold of sun in sight, dispelling fears!

PEACE, pledged, at last, to Man!
Oh! if there only ran
Thrill of such surety through one human soul,
Would not the swift joy start
From beating heart to heart,
Lighting all lands, leaping from pole to pole?

PEACE, PEACE—*to come! to be!*
If such were certainty
Far-off, at length, at latest, any while,
What woe were hard to bear?

What sorrow worth one tear?
Murder would soften; black Despair would smile.

But, heralded on high;
From midnight's purple sky
Dropped like the sudden rain which brings the flowers;
PEACE! Aye to dwell with men;
No strife, no wars! *And, then,*
The coupled comfort of those golden hours.

GOODWILL! Consider this,
What easy, perfect bliss
If, over all the Earth the one change spread
That Hate and Fraud should die,
And all, in amity,
Let go rapine, and wrath, and wrong, and dread!

What lack of Paradise
If, in angelic wise,

Each unto each, as to himself, were dear?
If we in souls descried,
Whatever form might hide,
Own brother, and own sister, everywhere?

All this,—not whispered low
To one heart, full of woe
By reason of blood-reddened fields of Earth,
By sight of Fear and Hate,
And policies of State,
And evil fruits which have from these their birth:

But, through their ears, to us
Straitly imparted thus
With pomp of glittering Angels, and their train;
And radiance of such light
As maketh mid-day night,
And heavenliest speech of Heaven, not heard again

Till these things come to pass!—
Nay, if it be—alas!—
A Vision, let us sleep and dream it true!
Or—sane, and broad-awake,—
For its great sound and sake,
Take it, and make it Earth's; and peace ensue!

So, when the Angels were no more to see,
Re-entering those gates of space,—whose key
Love keeps on that side, and on this side Death—
Each shepherd to the other whispering saith,
Lest he should miss some lingering symphonies
Of that departing music, "Let us rise
And go even now to Bethlehem, and spy
This which is come to pass, showed graciously
By the Lord's Angels." *Therewith hastened they*
By olive-yards, and old walls mossed and grey
Where, in close chinks, the lizard and the snake
Thinking the sunlight come, stirred, half-awake:

Across the terraced levels of the vines,
Under the pillared palms; along the lines
Of lance-leaved oleanders, scented sweet;
Through the pomegranate-gardens sped their feet:
Over the causeway, up the slope, they spring,
Breast the steep path, with steps unslackening;
Past David's well, past the town-wall they ran
Unto the House of Chimham, to the Khân;
Where mark them peering in, the posts between,
Questioning—out of breath—if birth hath been
This night, in any guest-room, high or low?
The drowsy porter at the gate saith "No!"—
Shooting the bars; while the packed camels shake
Their bells to listen, and the sleepers wake;
And to their feet the ponderous steers slow rise,
Lifting from trampled fodder large mild eyes.—
"Nay! Brothers! no such thing! yet there is gone
Yonder, one nigh her time, a gentle one!
With him that seemed her spouse—of Galilee;

They toiled at sun-down to our doors—but, see!
No nook was here! Seek at the cave instead;
We shook some barley-straw to make their bed."

Then to the cave they wended, and there spied
That which was more, if truth be testified,
Than all the pomp seen thro' proud Herod's porch
Ablaze with brass, and silk, and scented torch,
High on Beth-Haccarem; more to behold,
If men had known, than all the glory told
Of splendid Cæsar in his marbled home
On the white Isle, or audience-hall at Rome
With trembling princes thronged. A clay lamp swings
By twisted camel-cords, from blackened rings,
Showing with flickering gleams, a Child new-born
Wrapped in a cloth, laid where the beasts, at morn
Will champ their bean-straw: in the lamp's ray dim
A fresh-made Mother by Him, fostering Him
With face and mien to worship, speaking nought;

Close at hand Joseph, and the ass, hath brought
That precious twofold burden to the gate;
With goats, sheep, oxen, driven to shelter late.
No mightier sight! yet all sufficeth it—
If we will deem things be beyond our wit—
To prove Heaven's music true, and show Heaven's way,
How, not by famous kings, nor with array
Of brazen letters on the boastful stone,
But "by the mouth of babes," quiet, alone,
Little beginnings planning for large ends,
With other purpose than fond man attends,
Wisdom and Love in secret fellowship
Guide our World's wanderings with a finger-tip;
And how, that night, as these did darkly see,
They sealed the first scrolls of Earth's history,
And opened what shall run till Death be dead.

Which Babe they reverenced, bending low the head,
First of all worshippers, and told the things

Done in the plain, and played on Angels' strings.
Then those around wondered and worshipped, too,
And Mary heard—but wondered not—anew
Hiding this in her heart, the heart which beat
With blood of Jesus Christ, holy and sweet.

Also, not marvelling, albeit they heard,
Stood certain by—those three swart ones—appeared
From climes unknown; yet, surely, on high quest
Of what that Star proclaimed, bright on the breast
First of the Ram, afterwards glittering thence
Into the watery Trigon; where, intense,
It lit the Crab, and burned the Fishes pale.
Three Signiors, owning many a costly bale;
Three travelled Masters, by their bearing Lords
Of lands and slaves. The Indian silk affords,
With many a folded braid of white and gold,
Shade to their brows; rich goat-hair shawls did fold
Their gowns of flower'd white muslin, midway tied;

And ruby, turkis, emerald—stones of pride—
Blazed on their thumb-rings; and a pearl gleamed white
In every ear; and silver belts, clasped tight,
Held ink-box, reeds, and knives, in scabbards gemmed;
Curled shoes of goat-skin dyed, with seed-pearls hemmed,
Shod their brown feet; hair shorn; lids low, to think—
Eyes deep and wistful, as of those who drink
Waters of hidden wisdom, night and day,
And live twain lives, conforming as they may,
In diligence, and due observances,
To ways of men; yet, not at one with these;
But ever straining past the things that seem
To that which Is—the Truth behind the Dream.
Three princely wanderers of the Asian blood
Perchance, by Indus dwellers; or some flood
That feeds her from Himâla's icy dome;
Or, haply, to those Syrian palm-trees come

From Gunga's banks, or mounts of Malabar
Which lift the Deccan to its sun, and far—
Rampart-like—fringe the blue Arabian Sea.
True followers of the Buddh they seemed to be,
The better arm and shoulder showing bare
With each; and on the neck of each, draped fair
A scarf of saffron, patched; and 'twixt the eyes,
In saffron stamped, the Name of mysteries
OM; and the Swastika, with secrets rife
How man may 'scape the dire deceits of Life.

These three stood by, as who would entrance make;
And heard the Shepherds' tale; and hearing, spake
Strange Indian words one to another; then sent
Command. Their serving-men, obedient,
Cast loose from off the camels, kneeling nigh,
Nettings and mats, and made the fastenings fly
From belly-band, and crupper-rope, and tail;
And broke the knots, and let each dusty bale

Slide from the saddle-horns, and give to see
Long hoarded treasure of great jewellery,
And fragrant secrets of the Indian grove,
And splendours of the Indian looms, inwove
With gold and silver flowers; "for now," said they,
"Our eyes have seen this thing sought day by day;
By the all-conscious, silent sky well-known,
And, specially, of yon white star foreshown,
Which, bursting magically on the sight,
Beckoned us from our homes, shining aright,
The silver beacon to this holy hill.
Mark if it sparkles not, aware and still,
Over the place? The astral houses, see!
Spake truth: our feet were guided faithfully.
'Tis the Star-Child, who was to rise and wear
A crown than Suleiman's more royal and rare,
'King of the Jews.' Grant an approach to us
Who crave to worship Him."

Now, it fell thus

That these first to Jerusalem had passed;
And sojourned there, observing feast and fast
In the thronged city; oft of townsmen seen
In market and bazaar; and, by their mien
Noted for lordliest of all strangers there,
Much whispered of, in sooth, as who saw clear
Shadows of times to come, and secrets bright
Writ in the jewelled cypher of the Night.
So that the voice of this to Herod went
Feastful and fearful; ever ill-content
'Mid plots and perils; girt with singing boys,
And dancing girls of Tyre, and armoured noise
Of Cæsar's legionaries. Long and near,
In audience-hall, each dusky wayfarer
Questioned he of their knowledge, and the Star,
What message flashed it? Whether near or far
Would rise this portent of a Babe to reign
King of the Jews, and bring a crown again
To weeping Zion, and cast forth from them

The Roman scourge? And, if at Bethlehem,
As with one voice, priests, elders, scribes aver,
Then let them thither wend, and spy the stir,
And find this Babe, and come anew to him,
Declaring where the wonder. "Twas his whim,"
Quotha: "to be of fashion with the stars,
(Weary, like them, of gazing upon wars)
To shine upon this suckling, bending knee
Save unto Cæsar uncrooked latterly."

Thence came it those Three stood at entering
Before the door; and their rich gifts did bring:
Red-gold from the Indian rocks, cunningly beat
To plate and chalice, with old fables sweet
Of Buddh's compassion, and dark Mara's powers
Round the brims glittering; and a riot of flowers
Done on the gold, with gold script to proclaim
The noble Truths, and Threefold mystic Name
OM, and the Swastika; and how man wins

Blessëd Nirvâna's rest, being quit of sins,
And, day and night, reciting, "Oh, the gem!
Upon the Lotus! Oh, the Lotus-stem!"
Also, more precious than much gold, they poured
Rare spices forth, unknitting cord on cord;
And, one by one, unwinding cloths, as though
The merchantmen had sought to shut in so
The breath of those distillings: in such kind
As when Nile's black embalming slaves would bind
Sindon o'er Sindon, cere-cloth, cinglets, bands,
Roll after roll, on head, breast, feet, and hands,
Round some dead king, whose cold and withered palm
Had dropped the sceptre;—drenched with musk and balm,
And natron, and what keeps from perishing;
So they might save—after long wandering—
The body for the spirit, and hold fast
Life's likeness, till the dead man lived at last.
Thus, from their coats involved of leaves and silk,

Slowly they freed the odorous thorn-tree's milk,
The grey myrrh, and the cassia, and the spice,
Filling the wind with frankincense past price,
With hearts of blossoms from a hundred glens
And essence of a thousand Rose-gardens;
Till the night's gloom like a royal curtain hung
Jewelled with stars, and rich with fragrance flung
Athwart the arch; and, in the cavern there
The air around was as the breathing air
Of a queen's chamber, when she comes to bed,
And all that glad Earth owns gives goodlihead.

Witness them entering, those Three from afar—
Who knew the skies, and had the strange white Star
To light their nightly lamp, thro' deserts wide
Of Bactria, and the Persic wastes, and tide
Of Tigris and Euphrates; past the snow
Of Ararat, and where the sand-winds blow
O'er Ituræa; and the crimson peaks

Of Moab, and the fierce, bright, barren reeks
From Asphaltites; to this hill—to thee,
Bethlehem-Ephrata! Witness these three
Gaze, hand in hand, with faces grave and mild,
Where, 'mid the gear and goats, Mother and Child
Make state and splendour for their eyes. Then, lay
Each stranger on the Earth, in th' Indian way,
Paying the "eight prostrations;" and was heard
Saying softly, in the Indian tongue, that word
Wherewith a Prince is honoured. Nimbly ran,
On this, the people of their caravan
And fetch the gold, and—laid on gold—the spice,
Frankincense, myrrh: and next with reverence nice
Foreheads in dust, they spread the precious things
At Mary's feet, and worship Him who clings
To Mary's bosom, drinking soft life so
Who shall be Life and Light to all below.
"For now we see," say they, departing: "plain
The Star's word come to pass! The Buddh again

Appeareth, or some Bôddhisat of might
Arising for the West, who shall set right,
And serve, and reconcile; and maybe, teach
Knowledge to those who know. We, brothers, each,
Have heard yon shepherds' prattling; if the sky
Speaketh with such, Heaven's mercy is drawn nigh!
Well did we counsel, journeying to this place!
Yon hour-old babe, milking that breast of grace,
The World will praise and worship, well-content."

Then, fearing Herod, to their homes they went
Musing along the road. But he, alway
Angered and troubled, bade his soldiers slay
Whatever man-child sucked in Bethlehem.
Lord! hadst Thou been all God, as pleaseth them
Who poorly see Thy God-like self, and take
True glory from Thee for false glory's sake;
Co-equal Power, as these—too bold—blaspheme,
Ruler of what Thou camest to redeem;

Not Babe Divine, feeling with touch of silk
For fountains of a mortal Mother's milk
With sweet mouth buried in the warm feast thus,
And dear heart growing great to beat for us,
And soft feet waiting till the way was spread
Whereby what was true God in Thee should tread
Triumphant over woe and death to bliss,—
Thou, from Thy cradle would'st have stayed in this
Those butchers! with one Angel's swift decree,
Out of the silver cohorts lackeying Thee,
Thou hadst thrust down the bitter Prince who killed
Thine innocents! Would'st Thou not? Was't not willed?
Alas! "Peace and Goodwill" in agony
Found first-fruits! Rama heard that woeful cry
Of Rachel weeping for the children; lone,
Uncomforted, because her babes are gone.
Herod the King! hast thou heard Rachel's wail
Where restitution is? Did aught avail

Somewhere? at last? past life? After long stress
Of heavy shame, to bring forgetfulness?
If such grace be, no hopeless sin is wrought!
Thy bloody blade missed what its vile edge sought;
Mother, and Child, and Joseph—safe from thee—
Journey to Egypt, while the Eastern three
Wind homewards, lightened of their spice and gold;
And those great days that were to be, unfold
In the fair fields beside the shining sea
Which rolls, 'mid palms and rocks, in Galilee;
As I—if I have grace—hereafter sing,
Telling the dream which came about this thing,
What time, with reverent feet, I wandered there
Treading Christ's ground, and breathing Christ's sweet
air.

BOOK I.

Mary Magdalene.

MARY MAGDALENE.

CLEAR silver water in a cup of gold,
Under the sunlit steeps of Gadara,
It shines—His Lake—the Sea of Chinnereth—
The waves He loved, the waves that kissed His feet
So many blessed days. Oh, happy waves!
Oh, little, silver, happy Sea, far-famed,
Under the sunlit steeps of Gadara!

Fair is the scene still, tho' the grace is gone
Of those great times when nine white cities dipped
Their walls into its brink, and steel-shod keels
Of Roman galleys ground its sparkling sands;
And Herod's painted pinnaces, ablaze
With lamps, and brazen shields, and spangled slaves,
Came and went lordly at Tiberias;

And merchant-ships of Ghôr, and fisher-boats,
From green Bethsaida and Chorazin, drove
Pearl-furrows in the sapphire of its sleep:
And, by its beach,—where the cranes wade mid-leg,
And long reeds lisp, and milky ripples roll
The purple-banded shells; and wind-fall'n flowers
Of date and oleander dye the rim
Of blown foam rosy-wended by, league-long
The caravans of Egypt, treasure-stuffed,
To proud Damascus, or thronged Sepphoris,
Or Accho's quays. Or, Cæsar's spearmen rode
Terrible with the eagles, bringing news
Of life and death from Rome. Or strode austere,
Contemptuous, flaunting phylacteries,
The Pharisee and Scribe. Or, noise of slaves,
Sweating beneath the litter's gilded poles,
Told where there passed some languid Palace dame
Fresh from the bath; or prætor, girt with rods:
Or there went by, upon its rocky brim,

The high-capped Median bringing stallions in;
The Indian traders with the spice and silk,
The negro-men from Cush, and Elamites,
And Red Sea sailors, and from shores of Nile
The blue-gowned, swart, Egyptian; for they filled
From all Earth's regions, in those bygone days,
The pathways by its waters: frequent feet
Of Tyrian traders, and dark Desert-men
Rocking upon their camels, with wild eyes
Glittering like lance-points; and Sidonians,
Syrians and Greeks and Jews; a motley world
Treading th' enamelled borders, where the vines
Ran clustering, and the almond's crimson snow
Rained upon crocus, lily and cyclamen
At feet of feathery palms, and tamarisks
Alive with doves and steel-bright halcyons.
And green and rich rose then the terraced fields
This coast and that; and loud the water-wheels
Poured the cool crystal of the stream and lake

Over a thousand gardens; and an air
Fresher than now; with breath of moistened growths—
Pomegranate, citron, fig—tempered the heats
Blown from the wilderness. And, more than now,
Beauteous the mountains soared, with girdling woods,
Homesteads, and villages, and melon-fields
Hanging between the rocks, and, side by side,
Temples of Jove and Pan, with synagogues
Of Israel's Jah. But, opening then, as now
To let swift Jordan stay his eager flood
Under their sunny peaks, foregoing there
The speed he took from Hermon; glad to spread
Broadened to lake, fringed with wild figs, and flags,
Peopled with pelicans and fish; and fain,
A little, to forget how he must glide
From river into bitter, barren, mere,
Must pass, from waving willows, and cool nooks
Of water-lilies, to lie salt and dead,

Sucked by the Sun, under hot Edom's crags,
In that red hollow of the Sea of Lot.

Now all is changed—all save the changeless things—
The mountains, and the waters, and the sky—
These, as He saw them, have their glory yet
At sunrise, and at sunset; and when noon
Burns the blue vault into a cope of gold.
And ofttimes, in the Syrian Spring, steals back
Well-nigh the ancient beauty to those coasts
Where Christ's feet trod. That Lily which He loved
And praised for splendour passing Solomon's—
The scarlet martagon—decks herself still,
Mindful of His high words, in red and gold,
To meet the step of Summer. Cyclamens
Lift their pale heads to see if He will pass;
And amaryllis and white hyacinths
Pour from their pearly vases spikenard forth,

Lest He should come unhonoured. In His paths
Still, as of old, the lowly crocus spreads
A golden carpet for Him; and the birds—
Small almoners of Heaven, as once He said,
Who fall not unregarded—trill their hymns
Of lively love and thanks in every thorn.
Only what Man could do, Man hath well done
To blot with blood and tears His track divine,
To sweep His holy footsteps from His Earth.
In steel and gold, splendid and strong and fierce,
Host after host under that Mount has marched
Where He sate saying: "Blessëd the peace-makers!"
In rage and hatred host with host has clashed
There where he taught, "Love ye your enemies!"
Banners which bore His cross, have mocked His cross,
Scattering His land with slain; till now, at last,
Truly the sword, not peace, is what He brought!
For love of Him nation hates nation so
That at His shrine the watchful Islamite

Guards Christian throats! Dead lie His once fair fields;
Barren the fallows where His Sower sowed;
None reaps the silver harvests of His Sea;
None in the wheat row roots the ill tares out.
The hungry land gasps empty in the glare;
The vulture's self goes famished; the wolf prowls
Fasting, amid the broken stones which built
The cities of His sojourn. Wild birds nest
Where revels once were loudest. All are gone
Save for those names never to pass away—
Capernaum, Bethsaida, Magdala,—
The nine white towns that sate beside His Lake.
Vanished the stately stoas, lofty fanes;
Vanished the walls, the towers, the citadels!
Titus and Omar wrought fair Palestine
No hurt like His who gave her hallowed ground
The fatal benediction of His feet!
Love's house is desolate for love of Love!
The waters glass no sail; the ways have shrunk

Into a camel-path; the centuries
With flood and blast have torn the terrace bare
Where the fox littered in the grapes. Ask not
Which was "His City" 'mid this ruined life!
None surely knoweth of Capernaum
Whether 'twas here, or there. Perchance He dwelt
Longest and latest at this nameless mound
Where, on the broken Column, nests the stork;
Where knot-grass with its spikes, and bitter balls
Of trailing colocynth, and nebbuk-thorns
Bind as they will the marble wrecks, and weave
Shelter for shy jerboas, and the snake.
So still, so far away, so quite forsook,
His City's burial-place, the painted grouse
Lays her eggs there in carved acanthus-leaves,
And crickets chirp where Cæsar's year is writ.
Yon Arab, with the matchlock and the spear,
Glancing askance—for Afreets haunt the spot—
Murmurs: "Peace be to you! This is Tell-Hûm!"

Desolate most of all, with one starved palm
And huddle of sad squalid hovels, thou,
El-Mejdel! burned a-dry beneath black crags,
Choked with thick sand, comfortless, poor, despised,
Who stretched beforetimes to the adjacent Lake
Proud fortress-arms, and—Lady of the plain,—
Holding the keys of glad Gennesaret,
Took tribute of all passers. Vainly praised
For thy strong Tower,—soaring so high, now laid
Lost in the dust—yet wert thou marked to live,
Stamped for immortal memory by one Name,
Hers who "loved much," and had her home in thee,
Mary of Magdala.

There 'twas I saw,
Or seemed to see, that night in Palestine,
Lodging in Mejdel, what is written now;
Lodging at Mejdel on a night of balm
When all the stars on high had sister-stars

Mirrored in Galilee's dark purple tide;
And the land lay, a-dream it lived again;
And all the past rolled back, and out of Heaven
Almost the fancy dared to hear that song:

PEACE BEGINNING TO BE,
DEEP AS THE SLEEP OF THE SEA
WHEN THE STARS THEIR STILL GLEAMS GLASS
IN ITS BLUE TRANQUILLITY:
HEARTS OF ALL UPON EARTH,
FROM THE FIRST TO THE SECOND BIRTH,
TO REST AS THE WILD WATERS REST
WITH COLOURS OF HEAVEN ON THEIR BREAST.

LOVE, WHICH IS SUNLIGHT OF PEACE
AGE BY AGE TO INCREASE,
TILL ANGER AND HATE ARE DEAD,
AND SORROW AND DEATH SHALL CEASE;
"PEACE ON EARTH AND GOODWILL!"

SOULS THAT ARE GENTLE AND STILL
HEAR THE FIRST MUSIC OF THIS
FAR-OFF, INFINITE BLISS!

THE third Spring after Jesus Christ had passed:
In the fifth moon, when Galilee is green,
And the palm shakes fresh feathers to the wind,
Came, through the gates of Magdala, at eve,
Spearmen and swordmen; and, on armoured steeds,
The Roman knights, and lictors with their rods;
The train of Pontius Pilate, moving North
To answer, before Cæsar, wrongs alleged
In rescript of the Lord Vitellius,
Legate of Syria. On Gerîzim's height
Grievously had he broke Samaria,
Chastising well, at first, rebellious folk;

But in his after wrath, it was put forth
He wronged the clemency of Rome, and wrought
Treason to Cæsar. "Therefore must he go
To meet, at throne-steps of Tiberius,
Those his accusers"—wrote Vitellius;
Thus 'twas the Procurator wended North.

And, as along the margin of the Lake
The wind swept cold, the Imperial Relegate
Would that night, with his wife, lie in the walls.
Thereat rose question where in Magdala
Meet room was for a Roman Consular
Of the high Samnite race of Telesine,
Judæa's Governor, thro' ten strong years,
And, maybe, yet to rule all Syria,
If Cæsar purges. Also, for his spouse
Procula; from the Claudian line; ill-apt
To couch patrician limbs in leathern tent,

Reared to the ivory and the gold, or share
Peasant's coarse shelter. And the townsmen said:
"One house we have where this great Lord might lie
Between the walls of Magdala—might halt
Well-honoured. 'Tis the Lady Miriam's
Who dwelleth yonder by the north Sea-gate;
Yon stone Khân, with the carved door and the palms.
Many fair chambers, and a garden-court
With marbles paved, and falling waters 'freshed,
And cedar work from Tyre, and well-girt slaves,
The Roman there shall find."

So it befell
That *Pilate lodged with Mary Magdalene.*

And there were those who heard what Pilate spake,
Upon the leewân leaning sad that night,

Unlulled by lute, or Syrian dance, or plash
Of fountains tinkling on the painted stones.
For sleep came not; and she, beside him, said—
Claudia Procula—"My Lord doeth ill
To keep sick vigil, when soft beds are spread,
And guards are set, and even Galilee
Lends so fair shelter that henceforth in Rome
We shall think gentlier of th' injurious land."
"In Rome? Ah, Rome!" stern Pontius cried: "but Rome
Held not my thought, great Claudia! nor these hogs
We herded with our spear-points, pricking them
Time after time to grunt. Cæsar is just,
And Cæsar will not judge me heedlessly—
Friend of Sejanus, and for ten years here
Keeping the heel of Rome on Herod's neck—
At word of vile Samaritans. But I
All day long, as we rode out from the plain
Of Esdraëlon—from Samaria

To Nazareth; and, threading Nazareth,
With horse and foot and litters, clattered on
Under the Horns of Hattîn, and so down,
Through that dark-shadowed Valley of the Dove,
To this green hollow, where the Jordan gains
Peace for a day, before he hastens on
To foam and fret and die—as rivers die,
And men die,—helplessly; I had in mind
The Man I did adjudge unrighteously.
Know'st thou, fair wife! that was His dwelling-place,
The poor, white, clustered town amid the hills
Where we clomb up from Kishon, and you saw
The hoopooes run in the rye—Solomon's birds,
Which knew the name of God! Would I had known
On *that ill day at the Prætorium!*
By Pan! I tell thee all the way He came,
The pale, sweet Man; the Man that was 'the King,'
And did adjudge us, His judiciaries.
I saw Him at Gerîzim, where I smote

Those dogs of Sychar—very pitiful
Marking the blood. And then, as if He paced
Effortless over bare Gilboa, 'twas He
Gazed on me at Megiddo, and Jezreel;
And Shunem and Chesulloth, always pale,
Always with that high look of godlike calm,
Those eyes of far perception—those mild eyes
I saw that morn in the Prætorium;
Accursed hour!—more in my thoughts than Rome!—
When Sanhedrists and Priests, with Caiaphas
To lead the learnëd rabble, broke my sleep,
And brought, that I should doom Him, that one Man
Whom, of all Jews, I hated not, nor scorned.
And when I asked, 'What accusation
Have ye against this One?' and bade them judge
According to their law (which—under Rome—
Held no more power to kill), they, wanting blood,
Must have me hear how He perverted minds,
Decried our tax, would pull the Temple down,

And make Himself a King. 'Sooth! to make Kings,
And unmake, was for Cæsar's self alone;
Wherefore, to keep unbroke our Roman peace;
And yet to spare this Man, I led Him in
Away from those that clamoured, to my hall,
Thinking to clear Him, when His trembling lips,
Inside the Agrippeum, gave me ground
To make it good at Rome, and guard the peace,
Yet choke those hounds from their most innocent prey.
But as I questioned Him upon these things,
And asked, "Art Thou, indeed, King of the Jews?"
Lo! He, with such a mien as one should have
Wearing the purple, spake full royally,
'Aye! as thou sayest, a King!' and, no word more!
Still I went on: 'Speakest Thou nought to me
Whose nod can send Thee hence to live or die?
Art thou King of the Jews?' And the Man said,
'Yea! King! yet not of any earthly realm:

To this end was I born, and therefore came
King of all Kings, because I witness Truth.'
Then asked I, 'What is Truth?' He answered nought;
Or I was wroth, and hearkened not: hot scorn
Shook me, to hear that horde of circumcised
Howling for blood outside my Palace-gates.
So, yet anew, thinking to stay their lust
With some ignoble gobbet, I came forth
And from my Bêma spake: 'Ye have the right
Now, at your Passover, that I release
Some one condemned: See! I set this Man free;
And give for your good sport another prey
Also called Jesus—Jesus Bar-Rabban!'
The vile herd shouted, 'Set us free the thief!'"

And Claudia moaned: "I, too, remember well!
I saw Him from my lattice, and His eyes
Burned themselves on my heart. Truly a King
Of Truth—if anywhere such kingdom be!"

"By Hercules!"—the Roman yet went on—
"I would that I had hearkened, asking that
Which none hath answered; not the Samian;
Nor he of Citium; nor the oracles;
Nor any Augur, out of any bird;
Nor the high Flamens, nor dread Jove himself.
Who knows whence gleamed the fire of those strange eyes
Which had no fear, nor any bitterness,
But seemed to look beyond us, glad to die?
They drove me forth again, angry and sick,
Crying: 'I find no fault in Him, at all!'"

And Claudia sighed: "There was no fault at all!"

"Thence sent I Him to Antipas. That fox
Worried with claws of spite my patient one
But would not bite. So came He back to me;
And—sitting there upon the Gabbatha,

With Rome and Justice by—I might have saved!
What was for me to fear? Thrice before that,—
Once—when I brought the silver eagles in,
Though all Jerusalem yelled at my gates;
Once, when I spent those pious shekels, stored
In their most holy treasury, to fetch
Fair water from the pools of Solomon,
That they might drink clean swill; and once again,
When I hung up, in the Herodeum,
The gilded shields of Cæsar; I did set
These Jewish swine at nought. But then, oh, then!
I faltered, paltered, yielded; Claudia! yea,
I played worse traitor to my Roman soul
Than aught e'er done to Cæsar. I, who read
That daybreak, on my scroll, how Socrates—
In the sweet Greek—with loftiest scorn of life—
Condemned the Athenian judges to live on,
And took, triumphant, from their guilty lips,
Gift of his hemlock! Oh, thou great, grave face!

That journey'dst with me all this mindful day,
Amid thy watching hills of Galilee;
Why did'st Thou not reply? I might have saved!
Why would'st Thou not reply? I would have saved!
Moreover, wife! did'st thou not send to me—
Me, whom my Father told of Julius,
And how he bled, and how Calphurnia dreamed—
That message of thy vision, saying, 'Lord!
Deal thou in nothing with that innocent one,
For I have suffered much in sleep this night
Because of Him?'"

And Claudia answered: "Aye!
I sent thee word: for, in the morning watch,
When dreams glide truest thro' Sleep's gate of horn,
There came upon mine eyes in slumber sealed,
Shadow or semblance of the fairest form,
Presence most sweet and most majestical,
Seen amongst men. Nay, not of men it seemed,

For white Apollo, in our Atrium,
Wrought of the Thracian marble, was to this—
The high gods pardon!—but a satyr! Blood
Crimsoned His brow in beaded drops, from where
A crown of thorns pricked deep; and bloody holes
Marked either open palm, and either foot.
Yet, by the exceeding gladness of His face;
By His assured, benign, serenity;
These were, I knew, to some royal rights He had
But as imperial purple. Ah, the ray
Shed from those gentle eyes, flushed my stilled soul
With such a glow of glory, such delight
Of sudden seeing, as if I had been
An Apennine, touched singly by the sun,
Dyed rose-red by some earliest shaft of Dawn,
While all the other peaks were dark, and slept.
But soon my greatness faded; while I stretched
Eager quick hands of worship unto Him,
And fell upon my knees, for love, and fear;

And reverence and wonder; lo! He spake
Solemnly, and in accent known, it seemed,
More to my heart than ear; not in our tongue,
Nor any tongue, except what stars, and seas,
And the low voice of Night will sometimes use;
Saying full mildly—or He seemed to say:—
'This morn, thy Lord—if Heaven's way changeth not—
Will wrongfully adjudge Me unto death
Who am the lover of men, of him, thee, all,
And come to be Beginning of a time
When Peace shall reign and men see Angels near,
And perfect Love shall cast out Fear, which hath
The torment. But, not knowing well of this,
They, of whose blood I am, will spill My blood;
And he, if this dream help not, shall abet,
Delivering Me to die upon the Cross
For policy and Cæsar's Roman peace.
Whence, for all flesh deliverance, and the Light;
But for thee tears and woe, and for thy Lord

The burden of a shame, sinking his soul,
The burden of a name, intolerable,
Accurst thro' all the Ages, hated, scorned,
Long after I forgive and comfort him.
Wake from thy sleep, then; bid him list to thee
Saying what I have said!'

"So, with a start
I brake the bonds of slumber, and I heard,—
In place of that sweet voice, majestic, calm,
Making my terror tender—angry roars
As if of hungered beasts, men who cried out,
'Crucify this one; free us Bar-Rabban!'
And drawing nigh my latticed window, saw,
Oh, Jove! Him of my vision, passing down
Godlike, but not yet crowned with cruel thorns,
Nor pierced in hand or foot. What should it mean?
Was that—the Syrian with those searching eyes—
My warner in the dream? Trembling to see,

I snatched my tablets, drove the point i' the wax
Hasteful, as thou didst note; and wrote the word
Eheu! thou would'st not heed!"

And Pontius bent
His proud brows down, and muttered: "On my heart
Thy stylus pricked—but vainly! Cæsar's wrath
Were but the idle wind which stirs my hair,
If I had only back that Man, that hour!
Forever and forever have they passed;
And now, and yesterday, and all my days
Something which is not shame, and is not grief,
Nor womanish tenderness at blood and death—
Being soldier as I am, not apt to melt—
Nor penitence, strange to my Stoic mind
Which knows what hath been, must be;—but the pang
Of a strong spirit that betrayed itself;
Rage for the act reflection pardons not;
The sting of playing slave to Destiny;

Bite at my soul more sharp than fangs of those;
Whisper, as though to mock me from myself,
Mine own past words, the words I flung at them—
'That which is writ, is writ!' Thou wottest what fell:
The Patient One, who came to witness Truth,
To rule without a throne,—without—just gods!—
The Purple, or the Eagles, or the Spears—
Stood on my Paved Way, with their Cut-throat, there,
Side by side, nowise blenching; while they picked
A life to grace their festival. Thou knowest
They chose Bar-Rabban. Thereupon I asked,
'What will ye that I do with this your King?'
They howled: 'The Cross! the Cross!' and I let go
Their leash, and He was scourged, and mocked, and decked
With that sharp Crown thou sawest—gemmed with blood,
As I do sadly mind—and, o'er His back
Some evil-witted Hebrew flung, in spite

A red paludamentum-laticlave
To robe His sovereignty. Yet, even thus,
Sick at the midriff with my wrath—I stood!
Something I risked to save myself and Him.
'Twas while they clamoured: 'Give the Man for death!
'Tis due! He made Himself a Son of God!'
Was't, then, Apollo, masquing here below?
Or some Olympian? great Latona's son
At play-games 'midst us? and we scourging Him
That should have reared the altars? On such thought
Fain had I learned from those unlying lips
What it might mean; and drew Him in again,
To private speech, and questioned: 'Whence art Thou?'
No answer did He deign, till I had stormed:
'Answerest me nought, who have the power of Thee?'
High Jove! but then He answered, stripping me,
With sweet commanding scorn, of pride and might;
And making me a Cæsar, and our whips,

Blind bondsmen to some dread decree He knew
Driving us, like the moon which drags the tides,
Helplessly up and down the beach of things.
'Thou hast,' quoth He, 'no power of Me at all
Except it had been given thee from above:
Therefore is thy sin lighter!' Seest thou, Wife?
Here was thy Galilæan pitied me!
Found for His hangman pleas! At that fresh speech
Stamping Him prætor, me His prisoner,
I had more will to ransom; and I spake
Leading Him forth again: 'He is your King!'
Hoarsely they hooted: 'Cæsar is our King!
No King save Cæsar! If thou let Him go
Thou art not Cæsar's Friend!' 'Twas there I failed!
They held so much against me; many griefs;
The last, that blood I mingled, over-hot,
With the fools' sacrifice. And then, at Rome
Our Emperor nursed some grudges. Nigh to fall
Was great Sejanus; and those Roman streets

To see the statues haled to the melting-pot,
That kitchen wenches might have pans and plates
From him that had stood second in our world.
I did not dare! the knaves my firm soul struck
Through that one corslet-joint I could not patch;
I did not dare! *Me Miserum!* I took
Water, and washed my hands before the herd,
And cried: 'The blame of this just blood be yours!'
The rabble answered: 'Yea! on us, on us,
And on our children be His blood!' Oh, Dis!
'Grave those words deep on thy dark muniments,
If Hades be, and black assizes sit,
That, age by age, yon Hebrew priests may pay
Fair share of my accompt! I could not wash
My conscience clean! The water, to my eyes,
Ran foul and grimy to the golden bowl
From each palm, vainly laved. So did He pass
To lofty death, and I to life defamed.
What can they do, who hate me most, at Rome

One little part as deadly as this hurt
I wrought against myself?"

And Claudia groaned:

"He passed 'mid many portents—it was told.
Folks spake of darkness, earthquakes; in the midst
Of their proud Temple in the Adytum—
The veil suddenly rent; of cries to Heaven
Uttered, and that way answered. Didst thou hear
The talk ran that He had not died at all,
Or, dying, glided back to life again;
Was seen; ate, drank, walked, talked—Man among men—
Or if not Man (which could not be!) then shape,
Larva, or Lemur, or some unnamed thing,
Visible, seeming whatsoe'er Life seems;
And, lastly, 'scaped from sight? Those whom He left
A band of honest ones, give stoutly forth
He was caught up in clouds, snatched to the Blue.

And, day by day, my slave-girls say, this grows,—
Making a sect, which hath no dread of Death;
But will spend life and breath, and gold, and pains
To succour any wretch; because they hold
This Christ did die for him—grows, good my Lord!
Not only here, but in the coasts, and Isles;
And toucheth Athens, and hath crept to Rome."

"There, too?" broke Pontius, "must I find at Rome,—
Despite the stony tomb, the guards we set,
My soldier's word; the spear, stabbed socket-deep,—
That face which fills each night with dreams for me?
Will He run over-sea whose tireless step
Outstrips my swiftest war-horse, mends my stride
On every march, pitches my camp with me,
Sits with me in my tent, my judgment-hall,
My banquet-room, my bed-place? watches me
With those great eyes which do not hate, nor blast,
But send a keen light to my inmost self

Where I read: 'This is Pontius, Fortune's slave
For Cæsar's fear.' 'Sooth! why should I have played
Butcher to Caiaphas? Note, Claudia!
That blood of Julius, spilt to enfranchise Rome,
Bequeathed Augustus and Tiberius;
And this pure blood, belike, sown in Death's field,
May breed some different crop than peace and ease,
Things fall so wry with Earth, sometimes I think
Thy Galilæan erred not; that men's powers
Are lent them out of some Imperium,
Shadowy, majestic, unopposable,
Wronging all wrongers till they render right,
'Stablished behind the Thrones; where Fate's pipe blows
And we must dance the step, or be shoved by.
Know any of ye here of any wight
Who loved this Nazarene, and followed Him,
And cleaves, distraught, to such wild fancy yet
That Cross, and Spear, and grave-stone did not end?"

"Great Sir!" a Syrian hand-maid gave reply;
"This is the house is called 'Megaddela's,'
Named, as some will, from Magdal, where we lie;
And others from the braided locks she wore
Who lives House-mistress here; the long hair tressed
The Harlot's way. They told us, in the town,
This Dame,—much honoured now for noble works—
Was devil-haunted, and the wildest wench
Of Galilee, before the Nazarene
Tamed her, and taught her; and she grew His Friend,
Closest amid the faithful. Is't thy will
We bid her to the Presence?"

Pontius said:

"*I might command, for still I bear my seal;*
Authority sits yet upon my lip;
But here and now, I soften. Say to her
The Procurator, guest and friend, entreats
Speech with the Lady Miriam."

Thus met
She who most loved Him, he who rendered Him
To death:—Pontius and Mary! For, anon,
The bar slides backward of the Woman's Court,
And, on the stairway of the leewân, stood
One tall, and proud, and fair; albeit, past grief
Had dimmed the lustre of those large dark eyes
Bent upon Pilate. Rich the Jewish blood
Glowed through the sunburnt ivory of her face—
Unveiled for salutation—lending show
Of colour to the thinned uncoloured cheek,
But leaving pale as pearl-lined ocean shell
The full white neck, and—where neck rose to breast—
The tender margins of the bosom, bound
By silver-bordered cymar, crossed;—and pale
As moonlight's heart the low smooth forehead, framed
Under the black-waved hair; forehead and hair;
And eyebrows, bent like the new moon; full lids;
Silk lashes long and curved, shadowing with touch

Of softest melancholy that worn place
Where the tears gather—all declaring her
A Daughter of the Sun, in those climes born
Where light and life are larger. Ah, and marked
With stamp of those strong passions of the East
Where Nature has her pangs and throes not more
Than Man, cradled upon her burning breast,
Tender and quick. There are the Dawns of Love
Enkindling hearts with instant golden glow
Like morning in the desert; there Love's Noons
Consuming, all-revealing, shadowless;
With fiery fervour draining young hearts dry
As mid-day drinks the streams; and there Love's Eves
Swift-sinking from the fierce fit to the lull,
From sun-blaze, by brief dusk, to tranquil stars,
And satisfied, still Night. Earthquakes and floods,
Withering Simooms, and winds that tear the Seas
To milky madness; find their counterparts
In those own children of the Light, who live

And love and hate with pulse at quicker beat.
Such heart-storms gone on that high countenance
Had writ their passage, but not left her marred.
Rather, like some majestic Mount she showed
In Cathay or Japan,* whose lofty bulk
Raged once, all flame; which broke its boundaries,
And,—torn and red and furious,—scattered round
Levin, and lava-slime, and barren ash,
Blighting what lay below. Then came the hush;
And that which was all terrible, grew fair.
The Hill of Hell is Crest of Paradise!
The cup which on its head steamed scarlet reek
And spilled forth fires, wears in the cloudless Blue
A silvery rim of snows; the fevered breast
Slumbers in comforted, unbroken, calm,
With placid bands of gilded clouds girt round,
And hues of sunrise and of sunset soft

* The lines ensuing were written at the foot of the famous extinct volcano, Fuji San, near Tokyo, in Japan.

On the scorched rocks. Where molten channels ran
Streams of sweet mountain crystal babble down
Embellishing black glen, and fissured cliff,
Deep hollows where sad Winter hides away
From Summer, with the snow still in her lap;
And shoulders of sharp crags and windy shelves,
With laughing light of flowers, and sparkling threads
Of the white falling water, and green glades
Where wild birds have their home, and plumy ferns
Wave for them, and the iris decks their nests
With flutter of her purple velvet flags.
And, in the happy plain, that Mountain's foot
Stands feared no more, but worshipped, watched, and praised
For comeliness exceeding, and large gifts
Of cooling airs, and shadows cast around,
And wandering cloud-banks with their welcome rains
Gathered and garnered; fringed with villages
And wandering flocks, and vines, and clustering groves

Whose roots, in death and desolation fixed,
Make loveliness of loss, and grace of wreck.
So did that Lady show a peace and charm,
A gracious presence, brought from passions stilled,
From tempests of the blood, for ever hushed:
Fairer, maybe, as she stood there, serene,
Than in those bygone days, the evil days
When Galilee, down to its utmost edge,
And all the South, was loud with talk of her
Who walked in woven gold, and wore her braids—
A Queen of Sin—crowning the shameless brow
With diadem of tresses, tied with pearls;
And set her henna-scented feet on necks
Of Greek and Latin lovers.

Now, most meek
The proud, pale, bended face; the folded palms,
The knees touching the pavement, as she said:
"The Roman Lord, who may command, hath prayed

Speech with his servant. She must needs obey,
Hostess and subject. I am Miriam!"

"Wottest thou who I am?" asked Pontius.

The flame of those old fires a little leaped;
The fair hill shook again with bygone storms
One moment, while she murmured: "Time hath been
When, with a curse, or by my girdle-knife,
The answer of thy handmaid had been given.
Now I have grace to say I hate thee not,
But pray His peace for thee. Did He not pray
"Father, forgive them!" Yea, I know thee well!
'Twas thou didst send my Master to the Cross!"

"Hast thou forgiven, who didst love Him so
That which my well-worn soul, careless of blood,
Pardons not to itself?" quoth Pontius.

And Mary said: "I could not love Him so,
Nor rightly worship Him, nor live to-day—

As always I must live, on the dear food
Of His true lips, nor trust to go to Him
The way He went, if I forgot His word—
'Love ye your enemies.' Remembering that
I bear to look upon thee, Roman Lord!
Remembering what we heard Him say at last:
'Forgive them, for they know not what they do.'"

"Nay, but I knew!" quoth Pontius: "whereunto
Prayed thus thy Rabbi? what new God had He?
What God hast thou, greater than Jove—to nod,
And so undo past deeds which have been done,
And—as thou sayest—'forgive?'"

"That which befalls,"
She gave reply, "befalls not otherwise
Than as it hath been willed. He made us know
There cometh to the ground no little fowl,
No sparrow of the house-top, but its end

Was cared for; and the flowers, and lowly grass,
Which are to-morrow for the wayside fire,
Have raiment fore-provided them to wear
Brighter than Solomon's. If not one life
Goes anywhere to death, save for good use,
And by the over-arching Power allowed,
Under vast Law of Love, He—most of all—
Died for Love's sake, and was ordained to die,
Whom thou didst doom. Yet thou thyself wast doomed
To do Love that sad service, slaying Him
Who could not die, but freeth all from death:
For we have seen Him, strong, and beautiful,
And living on the farther shore of Death.
Therefore we hate thee not, but pity thee;
And those like thee whose evil prospers good;
And pray for thee, since Love alone helps Hate
To 'scape the whips that scourge it into Right,
And bring it by long penance into peace

Unwittingly;—under a greater Name
Than what thou namest, and thy Romans serve."

"Yea!" Pontius mused: "He spake to me of power
Lent from above, and not from Jove, or Rome!
What hindered that I should not use it, then,
To have thy peace this night in place of irk?
To taste full greatness of thy feebleness,
Not groan with littleness of majesty?"

She answered: "That which hindered was thyself
More feared of Cæsar, than of wrongfulness;
And that which hindered was thy lust to win
Favour of men instead of praise from Heaven,
Whose still Voice whispered thy vexed will in vain.
He spake to us: 'Lay up no treasures here,
Where moth and rust corrupt, and thieves do steal;
But lay it up in Heaven!'"

Pilate brake in:

"*Mehercle!* I would give much sesterces
To buy that ill time back, albeit, before,
Death never spoiled my slumbers! What saidst thou,
That, slaying Him, we could not kill? Thy brow
Weareth no brand of madness, yet thy speech
Sounds rank unreason!"

"Have I leave," she asked,
For my great Master's sake, to speak more near?"

"I pray thee very humbly," Pontius said,
"To speak as thou shalt deign."

Thereat she rose
Stateliest,—and light of living Love and Truth
Made fairer her fair face, kindled her eyes
To lovelier lustre, while she told the things
Which had befallen after Calvary.

How, surely, with the sad days ending there
New days were dawned, and hopes unknown to Earth.
How He walked here, the shadow of Him Love,
The speech of Him soft Music, and His step
A Benediction; making sick folk whole,
The lame to walk, the lepers to go clean,
And taking back the dead from Death, by might
Of some deep secret which He had of Heaven.
Until,—at that hard triumph of the Cross,
In hour, and way, and by th' appointed hands—
He Himself passed, mild and majestical,
Through Death's black gate, whose inner side none saw
Before He set it wide, golden and glad,
Conqueror for us of the Unconquerable.
Also, along these coasts, what works He wrought—
Many most mighty works—and how He taught
The nearness of eternal things, the law
Of perfect Sonship; being Son of God
By eminence of manhood; King of Kings

By royalty o'erpassing realms and crowns.
Also, she told beautiful words He spake,—
Words of bright mercy and of boundless peace—
With wisdom wondrous, clad in simplest speech
As scent, and silver leaves, are shut, and seed,
For golden gardens under suns to come,
In the upfolded flow'r-cup. "Which blest buds,"
Spake she: "shall blossom ever more and more
For all flesh living, till the full fruit rounds,
And there be 'Peace on Earth—Peace and Goodwill!'"

But many drew into the marbled Court
Silently, one by one, hearing those words
Fearless and sure, spoke high to Pontius.
For, 'twas as though the Angels' song anew
Found echo in our air. And, 'mid them came—
Leaving his kneeling camel at the gate—
A swarthy stranger in the Eastern garb,
Girdled and turbaned, as those use who wend

In the far-toiling Caravans of Hind.
Reverent and wrapt he stood; and, when she ceased,
Drew swiftly from his breast a silken roll
Tied with a silvered thong, and, bending low,
Laid this at Mary's foot.

But Pilate leaped
Fierce, from his place; with visage white and writhed.
"Call them to horse!" he cried, "for I will ride
To Sepphoris, before the Sun is high,
If spurs can prick! One other watch spent here
Will brand me Nazarene!" Therewith he flung
Furiously forth, buckling his Roman sword,
And strode down to the margin of the Lake,
While in the street, with sleepy stumbling tread,
Spearmen and slaves slow gathered for the march.

But over Galilee, the first rays spread—
Tender and pearly—of that Dawn, who takes

No taint of Earth, whereon her white feet walk.
The hills of Gadara were ridged with rose,
And every wimpling wavelet of the Sea
Rolled a light edge of silver on the gloom.
A blue belt widened; and the beam, which broke
Between the Morning-star and Night's last clouds,
Even while it showed the wind-flower's stainless cup,
And the red lily, waiting for her Lord,—
Gleamed on the greaves of Pilate, gemmed his helm
With dancing flecks, and lit his studded shield
With soft forgiving splendours. And that breeze
Which is the breath of Day, waking the world,
Stirred with no gentler waft the innocent plumes
Of water-linnets, rousing in the reeds,—
Than the proud purple of his martial cloak
Clasped with the brazen eagles. And, he mused,
One sandal in the ripples of the Lake,
Which did not shun his foot:—"Aye, by the gods!
She spake of this! 'He makes His Sun to shine

On evil and on good!' Who makes? We held
'Twas young Apollo, driving steeds of gold,
That made. Not Cæsar, certes! for whose wrath
I sold myself to Rabbi Caiaphas.
Yet blows this breeze as tender on my cheek
As if 'twere hers of Magdal, who hath sinned
And lives the sweetlier! Yon all-seeing Sun,
Hastening above the verge, dips not again
To mark me standing in the waves He loved!
Those waves, with wet lips, kiss my wrongful foot;
The blind blooms waft me fragrance! Wherefore fear?
Why tremble? Yet, a Son of Heaven! A King!
Would I had heard His answer! Would I knew
What portion mine must prove, if these things grow
And Rome should pass, and huge Olympus' self
Be emptied of its gods!"

Thereat he turned
To stride his snorting war-horse; and the Day

Broadened in glory over Galilee,
Forgetting no man's roof; giv'n out of Heaven
Alike to all, to warm and comfort all.
And, in the whispering palms, and waving grass,
Once more that lovely promise seemed to sound:

HEARTS OF ALL UPON EARTH,
FROM THE FIRST TO THE SECOND BIRTH,
TO REST AS THE WILD WATERS REST,
WITH THE COLOURS OF HEAVEN ON THEIR BREAST.

BOOK II.

The Magus.

THE MAGUS.

THE writing of the silken roll was this,
In Syriac set fair; with much soft phrase,
Of Salutation, and high courtesies
Precedent: then she read:

"One nowise meet—
Except for humbleness and gravity—
To kiss the latchet of her shoe who walked
Closest and dearest of His nearest friends,
With Jesus, called The Nazarene, doth pray
Speech of the Lady Miriam. He comes,
By eight hard moons, from Indus to this sea
In quest of it; last quest of waning life,
Seeing thy servant numbereth fourscore years,
Ill-apt for journeyings. A slave lays these

Before thy feet; himself, thy slave, awaits,
Making the Eight Prostrations."

Hearing that,—
Upon the morrow, for his errand's sake,
And for his years, and for fair courtesy,
She gave good answer, writing how her gates
Stood wide for such an one, and she herself
His handmaiden.

Thereat, with goodly train
Of serving-men and beasts caparisoned,
Camels and riding asses—to her door
Came this far-travelled Elder; entered in
With silvered brows bowed low, and thin worn hands
Clasped meekly, palm to palm, before his breast—
The Indian way. Upon the pavement there
He placed his forehead, and, in soft wise, spake:

"Art thou that Miriam of Magdala
Whose name is borne to us with Name of Him
That was the Teacher here; and wrought great works;
And died at last the death upon the Cross,
Three spring-times back, thyself beholding this?"

And Mary said: "My name with His great Name
Was no more worthy to keep company
Than the pale fire-fly with the risen sun!
Yet am I she who in His glorious light
Through two years dwelled, and breathed the blessed air
Sweet with His breath, and in these happy ears
Took the great music of His wisdom. Sir!
How shall this stead you? and what purposes
Brought thy most honourable feet so far?"

He made reply: "I alone live, of Three
Who many winters past, came to thy land
Led by a strange white Star, burst suddenly
New from the spangled purple of the Night:

And, while we read the sky, our knowledge grew
That this beamed token of a Teacher born
Illumining the world, as that great Star
Shot its fair splendours far: But loving Light,
And always seeking Light—as taught of Buddh—
We journeyed hither from our Indian hills
Wending to Bethlehem; and found that Babe
Whom thou hast known as Man, divinely signed
By praise and portent to be Whom we sought.
So, at those little feet we laid our gifts,
Worshipping, and we looked upon the face—
Tender and pure—of Her that bore the Babe;
Then, warned betimes of Herod's dark design,
Homeward returned. There, while the years went by,
Came presently, borne by the Caravans,
Word of this Wonder grown; and, to our minds,
The gold and silk and myrrh of all their bales
Counted but dross to what was wafted us
Of loftiest wisdom and large doctrines given

To mend the old. But those that came with me
Beforetimes, died; desiring to know this;
And I myself die soon,—which is not feared
By such as follow great Lord Buddha's Law.
Yet had I will unquenchable to learn
The setting of that Star of Men, whose rise
My younger eyes beheld. Therefore, once more
Over this weary way my steps have passed,
To hear before I die. And, when men said
In Magdal, by the Lake of Galilee,
She dwelleth, who did love and serve Him most,
My face I turned, sweet Lady! to thy gate,
And, by thy graciousness emboldened now,
I make my prayer."

"What prayer?" soft she replied,
Lifting, and leading him with tender hand,
As daughter doth her sire, to that raised seat
Upon the leewân.

Then he said: "Mine ears
Hunger to know, what thou canst best impart,
The deeds thy Jesus did, the words He spoke,
The ways He walked, the manner of His days,
And of their close, and what it is they tell,—
Strange and unheard before,—how, after death
He was seen living. Talk of such new things
Came to us by the merchants, making trade
From ours to yours. One sate upon a Mount
Which hangs above thy town; and heard Him speak
Words to a multitude, whose echoes faint—
All so far-off—were heavenly; like the musk
Which keeps his fragrance through a thousand leagues.
One, selling spices in Jerusalem,
Caught, as he lay at Bethany, some waft
Of some wight, fetched to breath again, being dead;
—An 'Eleazar,' townsman of the place:—
And yet another, wending from the sea,
Met Him in Tyre, and had it from the mouth

Of a Sidonian woman, how He healed
Her child—being distant far—with one strong word.
Yet, more than any marvels, would I learn
What truths He taught beyond those truths we know
Of our Lord Buddha. Such my humble prayer,
And hither have I journeyed, hoping this."

The light of larger love than shines for Earth
Made beautiful her eyes, while at his knee
She bowed; and kissed his hands; and reverently
Spake: "Surely thou art one He would have praised,
Desiring truth; and He hath bidden us
Declare what truth we know. Small wit I have
To tell a tenth part of the sweetness poured
From those dear lips; yet, what I saw and heard
Gladly shall I recite. Sojourn, I pray,
Here, with thy servants, for a space; and take
Rest from that too long road!"

Thus did it fall
That, day by day for six fair friendly days,
The Lady and the Indian Magus sate
In gentle converse: Mary nowise loath
With Memory's spell to fetch the good hours back
When He was near; and that grave Eastern sage
Listening more close, to catch the least of it,
Than lover for the last words of the loved.
And where they sate the place was suitable
For lofty talk. A cool, white paven Court
Shut by high walls from noise of the bazaar,
With fountains tinkling on the veiny stones;
And trickling basins, where the silvery fins
Of fishes fanned; and crimson lôtus-cups
Lolled on the water; and papyrus spread
Her filmy fingers; and in painted jars
Citron and oleander spread around
Delicious odours; and, with fearless wing,
The friendly silken swallow, nest-building,

Came and went lightsome, through the latticed stone;
Where rounded arches let the blue sky in
And one might see a topmost palm-branch wave.
There, on the soft-piled carpets, sadly-glad,
Told she the Master's story, as I tell.

"What was, in the beginning of these things,
Scantly I know by hearing; and such word
As, sometimes, from the brothers of my Lord,
Or from His Mother, fell. But those not apt
Greatly to speak; since, well-nigh to the end,
Scant honour found He in His father's house:
And She who bore Him—blessèd beyond all
Of mortal mothers—bore a load besides
Of love and fear, wonder and reverence,
So heavy on her heart that her still lips
Were locked as if an Angel held them close.
Only you saw, if Heaven should seek on Earth

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Fit Mother for its Messenger of grace,
Fit womb to lock such precious treasure safe,
These were the eyes,—communing with the skies—
That was the face,—tender and true and pure;—
There was the breast,—beautiful, sinless, sweet—
This was the frame,—majestic, maidenly—
And these the soft strong hands, and those the arms,
And those the knees; bent daily in meek prayer—
Whereto the Eternal Love would needs commit
The flower of Humankind to bud and blow.

"I, who have been that which He found me, hide
My stained cheeks in my hands, speaking of her
Who showed so noble, humble, heavenly,
So virginal and motherly; so fair,
The Rose of Women. Sir! if thou should'st pluck
A thousand lilies here in Galilee
One would show whitest silver; one would have
Most gold at heart. And, Sir! if thou should'st fetch

A thousand pearls up from thy Arab Sea
One would gleam brightest, best! The queenliest gem,
The choicest bloom, would happen suddenly;
Unlooked for! What hath made them perfect, none
Wotteth, no more than where the fount will rise
Amid a hundred hollows of the grass
Whence the stream starts; no more than which shall be—
Of cedar-apples shed by myriads
When sea-winds shake the groves on Lebanon—
The chosen one to shoot, and grow, and spread
A roof of dark green glory o'er the hill.
In such wise, as I dare to deem, He came
Of purest Mother Perfect Child, begot
Divinelier, surely, than we know; arrived
In this world,—of the many worlds,—by path
Leading to birth as new, as sweet, as strange
As what His dear feet opened past the Tomb.
If we should strive to say in mortal speech

Where He was Man, and why much more than Man,
The earthly words would mar the Heavenly truth.
Love tells it best in her simplicity;
And Worship in his deepest silences.

"Thou knowest of the Birth, and how there fell
Lauds out of Heaven to hail Him, and high songs
Of peace, and comfortable years to come:
And of the bitter Prince; the murdered babes,
The cry of childless mothers. How they fled—
Mary and Joseph—to the Land of Nile,
By Hebron and by Ziph, sore-toiling south
Over the Brook of Egypt. On their way
'Tis told the palm-trees stooped to give them fruit;
That dragons of the Desert slid their scales—
Shamed to be deadly—into cleft and den:
That robbers, by the road, flung spear and sword
Down on the sand, and laid their fierce brows there,
Convinced of evil by mere majesty

Of Babe and Mother. And dry Roses bloomed
Back into beauty, when their garments brushed
The Rose-bush; and a wayside sycamore
Beneath whose leaves they rested, moved his boughs
From noon till evening with the moving sun
To make them shade. And, coming nigh to On—
Where stands the House of Ra,—its mighty god,
Cut in black porphyry, prodigious, feared,
Fell from his seat. But if all this be so
I wot not.

"Two years sojourned they by Nile:
Then Herod died, and Archelaus ruled
Judæa, and Antipas in Galilee;
And to the parts of Galilee they came,
Home to their city, white-roofed Nazareth."

The Indian said: "I passed by Nazareth,
Riding from Esdraelon that steep path
Where your hills open."

"Thou hast thereby seen"—

Mary replied:—"the place which was His own
Those thirty years of holy quietude
When He was growing to His manhood fair,
And the birds knew Him, and the fields, and flowers;
But His world knew Him not. For we, and all
Went foolish, wondering at Jerusalem,
And Rome and Athens; not the little town
More great than these by that one lowly hut.
And thou hast thereby viewed what face His Earth
Morning and eve turned towards Him, showing Him
More love than we, by silent loveliness.
Thou saw'st, from His own hill, how Carmel plunged
Its broad foot in the tideless hyacinth Sea,
And how, to eastward, glad with groves and streams,
Rose Tabor, rounded like a breast; what leagues
Of grey and golden plains, fading to blue,
Stretched beyond Kishon, under Endor, Nain,
Down to Megiddo with her twofold peak,

And Gilboa, dry and smooth; and Sulem's slope;
And, between Sulem and soft Tabor, glimpse
Of Jordan's speed, with sunlit ramps beyond
Fencing the Desert. These did feed His eyes:
Here was His world, almost the all He saw.
The Sun, whose golden mandate well He knew,
Showed Him no more than this, of all His Earth;
The Stars, watching Him grow a star, to save,
Lighted no larger tract for His mild eyes.
Only that white town and those hills around,
Carmel and Tabor, as thou sawest them rise;
And here the Lake, and there the shining Sea.
Yet, from thy camel's saddle, thou could'st note
How fair and gracious was the land, made good
With grass and blooms, and clad in fruitful green,
Pasture and tilth; and every channel fringed
With rosy lanes of oleander sprays;
And every hollow thick with oak, and fig,
Palm, and pomegranate—where the tree-doves coo,

The crested hoopoe flits; the roller-bird
Lights the dark thicket with his burning blues;
The water-tortoise winnows the clear stream;
The white cranes watch their shadows in the pool;
The fish leap, red and silver; and the fox
Plays with her cubs, where lines of trellised vines
Climb the grey crags. A goodly land and still,
Habited by a people, pastoral,
Simple and poor; owning for wealth their skies,
Their Sea, their streams, and mountains."

"Nay! I saw,"
The Magus said: "with eyes rejoiced, your hills
Which follow well the sorrowful burnt rocks
Belting Jerusalem."

"Aye!"—she went on—
"Thither, each year, at time of Passover,
He wended with His parents; and would see

Gannîm and Sichem—where the lowland creeps,
Under the uplands, into narrowed green,
Like lake made river; with those crests for coasts
Ebal, Gerîzim; and by Gibeah
And Bethel, and the Valley of the Thorns,
To Scopus—to the brow where, white and gold,
Under sloped Olivet, the Temple rears
Her stately glory. And the Child would pass
Into the City's midst, and mingle there
With Jew and Gentile, in the thronged bazaar;
Would mark, above the sanctuary gate,
Herod's great Eagle; and the keen steel spears
Of Roman Annius, or Coponius,
Glitter around the black Prætorium.
Would know His time come nigh with Zion's shame,
And note the Pharisee and Sadducee,
Priest, scribe, and lawyer, feeding hungry souls
With husks of law. Nay, and would oft repair
Within the Temple; and was one day found

Astrayed, sitting amid the Rabbim there—
Hillel, and Shammai, and Gamaliel,
Ben Zacchai, Ben Uzziel, wise Nakdimon,
Arimathæan Joseph—all our best—
Hearing and asking questions. Yet none knew,
For all their wisdom and their wintry hairs,
That sweet Boy in the Syrian Country-frock,
With heavenly eyes and mouth of music, sent
To put aside the ancient scrolls, the Law,
The *Hagathôth* and *Halacôth*;—to break
Their chains, and into living spirit melt
Their dead cold letter."

"Ever back He came
Glad—so I deem—to sunlit Galilee:
Not bowing, not consenting, nowise bound
To that hard God, served in Jerusalem,
Jehovah of the Law, the jealous Lord
Who 'eye for eye, and tooth for tooth' decreed,

And loved the bloody sacrifice, and wrought
Good to His Tribes, but ill to enemies.
Day by day, wandering in those folded hills,
A statelier Temple in His heart He built;
A happier altar reared; a truer God
Enshrined; that Presence and that Power Who fills
All hearts with what is Life and what is Love,
And what endures when seen things pass away:
Nameless; or if, for human needs, we name
Them—from the narrow treasury of our tongues—
The highest, holiest, dearest, closest, best
Of Earth's weak words. Ofttimes, in later hours
When lack was of some name, He called that Spirit
Which is the All, and makes the wide seas roll,
The blue sky bend, the clustered planets shine,
The dead things come to life, the live things live;
That Being, which,—ever with Him,—was as He,
And, largest, fullest, in His own sure soul
Dwelt immanent—'Our Father.'"

Softly brake
The Magus in: "*Om, Amitaya!* Oh,
The Immeasurable!—What word but doeth wrong
Clothing the Eternal in the forms of Now?
Our great Lord Buddha would not name Him once,
As much,—as little,—'Mother,' 'Lover,' 'Friend,'
As 'Father;' being not He nor she, nor aught
Which may be compassed by an earthly word;
But Thinker, Thought, Maker and Made, in one!"

"My Friend is wise with many years, and lore
Of the large East," she said. "If no name be
Will not the weak souls say 'nought is to name'?"

"They say so! they will say so!" answered he,
"Yet is the Parabrahm unspeakable!"

"Tell me a little how thy Scriptures call
This Parabrahm"—she said.

The Indian mused,

And then replied: "We have a scroll which saith

Worship, but name no name! blind are those eyes

Which deem th' unmanifested manifest,

Not comprehending Me in My True Self,

Imperishable, viewless, undeclared.

Hidden behind My magic veil of shows

I am not seen at all. Name not My Name!'

Also a verse runs in our Holy Writ:

'Richer than heavenly fruit on Vedas growing;

Greater than gifts; better than prayer or fast;

Such sacred silence is! Man, this way knowing,

Comes to the utmost, perfect, Peace at last!'

Yet pause not, gracious Daughter! for mine ears

Drink with an unslaked thirst thy precious tale."

"'God is a Spirit! they who worship Him

In spirit and in truth must worship Him!'

[illegible]t, too!"—Mary went on,—and then

"Thus ligged He—as we gathered—all those y
In Nazareth: and Joseph died; and need
Came that He take, with all humility,
The load of common lives. So in that town
Hard by the fountain; in the house I know,—
(Oh me! I passed with Pappus by its porch;
We in the gilded litters, He at toil!)
His trade He plied, a Carpenter; and built
Doors, where folk come and go, unto this hour,
Not wotting how the hands which wrought their doors
Unbarred Death's gate by Love's high sacrifice;—
Tables whereon folks set their meat, and eat,
Heedless of who was 'Bread of Life,' and gave
Such food that whoso eateth hungereth not.
And in those little lanes of Nazareth
Each morn His holy feet would come and go
While He bore planks and beams, whose ba[illegible]ust bear

The cruel cross. And, then, at evening's fall
Resting from labour, with those patient feet
Deep in white wood-dust, and the long curled shreds
Shorn by His plane,—He would turn innocent eyes
Gazing far past the sunset to that world
He came from, and must go to; nigh to Him,—
Nigh unto us, albeit we see it not;
Whereof Life is the curtain, and mute Death
Herald and Doorkeeper. One eve, they say,
The shadow of His outstretched arms,—cast strong
By Sun-down's low-shot light,—painted a cross
Black on the wall; and, Mary, trembling, drew
Her garment o'er the lattice. But He spake:
'Near unto Me is near to loss and death;
And *far from* Me is far from Life and gain!'
There is a maid of those that love Him here
Sings on the minnîm a poor song of this,
If thou wilt hear; while those about us bring
He spake nd grapes, and we a little rest."

Thereat, a Hebrew girl tied back her sleeve,
Tuning the strings, and, to their melancholy,
Sang softly of "The Shadow and the Light."

"Meek and sweet in the sun He stands,
Drinking the cool of His Syrian skies;
Lifting to Heaven toil-wearied hands,
Seeing His Father with those pure eyes.

"Gazing from trestle, and bench, and saw,
To the kingdom kept for His rule above;
Oh, Jesus, Lord! we see with awe;
Ah, Mary's Son! we look with love!

"We know what message that Eventide
Bore, when it painted the Roman cross,
And the purples of night-fall prophesied
The hyssop to Him, and to us the loss.

"The crown which the Magi brought to her,
It made a vision of brows that bleed;
And the censer, with spikenard, and balm and myrrh,
It lay on the wall like the Sponge and Reed.

"But now Thou art in the Shadowless Land,
Behind the light of the setting Sun;
And the worst is forgotten which Evil planned
And the best which Love's glory could win is won."

"Yet, on His seldom-saddened countenance"—
Mary went on—"no shadows lay! He saw
By sunlight and by starlight, steadfastly,
That radiance of the kingdom, that high noon
Of Life and Love, which, shining inwardly,
Hath never any night. Therein He dwelt
Prince of the Heavenly purple; Heir and Son
Of spheres eternal and invisible,
Where meek souls sit the highest, and the poor

Are richest, and the pure in heart are Lords.
And, ever in His spirit, sage and calm
That which we name not habited, the sense
Of an abiding Presence, Fatherly,
Motherly, Friend-like, Lover-like; more dear
Than dearest ones on Earth, more near than blood
To the beating heart, or neck-vein to the neck;
More boundless than the immeasurable blue;
More mighty than a thousand-bolted Jove
Throned on some new Olympus, whose vast head
Smiteth the stars; more sweet to love and serve
Than dulcet-speaking mistress; more to trust
Than truest friend; more tender than the arms
Of nursing mother; more forgiving, fond,
Kindred, and kind, than Father. Yea, Great God
Making us gods and taking us to Him.

"Wherefore, grace spread around Him, and fair peace
Coming and going; and the air grew glad

Whithersoever He would pass; and gaze
Of townsfolk, and of women at the well—
Not knowing wherefore,—followed Him; and tongues
Were stilled, not knowing why, if He did speak.
For then, already, grew that mystery
Of wisdom in Him, and that word which seemed
Higher than Earth's. Afterwards, people told
Strange tales of those hid days,—how, at His toil,
Touching a plank, it stretched to rightful length,
Or shortened, at His will—the dead wood quick
To live again and serve Him. How He made
Birds out of clay, and clapped His hands, and lo!
They chirruped, spread their wings, and flew away;
And how in month of Adar, Syrian boys
Playing in Nazareth—as thou hast seen—
With girdled frocks, striped tunics, and feet bare—
Found Him, and crowned Him with white lily-buds,
And put a stick of lilies in His hand,
And set Him on the hillside, bending knee

In merry worship, and made whoso passed
Halt and bow lowly, crying: 'Hither come,
Worship our King, then wend upon thy way!'

"Surely, as thus we heard, at Nazareth
Full soft and holy sped the happy time
In the white hut, hard by that well, where yet
Wives come and go with pitchers, dawn and eve,
Who came and went with Him, and helped Him draw
Fair water thence, and bear it, dutiful,
To where His Mother wrought her household chares—
Silent, and wondering what should fall; and doves
Sunned on the roof their silver wings, and vines
Climbed, glad to glorify His lowly door.
Within thou wottest well what little rooms,
What chest of wood, gay-painted; on a shelf
What quilted beds uprolled; what pans and cups—
Copper, and brass and clay,—ranged duly round
With great jar at the back, by flag-leaves shut

To keep the water cool. And when Night fell
Hatchet and saw and nails laid in their place,
And the low table spread with peasant's food,
Rice and the libbân, and a common bowl.
Afterwards, peaceful sleep—yet, had men eyes
Sleep watched by wondering eyes of wakeful stars,
And guarded, out of that new-opening Heaven
By glorious Angels, golden sentinels,
Keeping Him safe, whose words shall save the world."—

BOOK III.

The Alabaster Box.

THE ALABASTER BOX.

NEXT morn,—upon the marble leewân met—
Soft salutations paid, and praise, and thanks—
"What hast thou in thy hand," the Indian asked,
"Which thou dost gaze upon so fixedly?"

For, sitting with her long hair loose, and eyes
Bent downwards, Mary in her clasped palms held
A broken box of Alabaster, shards
Of some rare casket, cut from satin stone,
Where the wrecked beauty of the precious work
Yet shone with lovely lustre; milk-white rock-
Veined rose and gold, and thinned, diaphanous,
So that light filtered through its fragments pale,
And, past them, the close clinging fingers showed.

"Good Friend!"—the Lady Miriam began—"thy Hind—
Which hath those rivers with the sands of gold,
And hills of lazulite, and fisheries
Whence the great pearls are gotten, could not buy
With all its precious store of Orient wealth
The treasure of this broken box from me!
Sweeter than spikenard odours, lingering still
On each white remnant of the wondrous toil,
Hangs the dear memory of a day more sad,
More glad,—more proud, more shameful—more to mourn,
More to rejoice in—than all other days
Of all thy handmaid's years. Nay, but my life
Rather began when this fair thing found end!
'Twas an Egyptian labour, cut with pains
From the streaked stone, and wrought, as thou shalt see,
By matchless master-craft, to make a gift
For Cæsar;—since the Emperor owned it first;

And next it fell to Rufus, but he gave
The beauteous marvel at his banquet board
To one that sold it for a hundred slaves;
So came it to Pandera. Did they tell—
Sending thee hither—thee so grey and grave—
What Miriam once had been?"

The Indian sage
Gave gentle answer: "If mine ears have heard
Evil of thee, my heart would quite forget,
Which hath no room to-day for any thought,
Not good and grateful, of my Lady's grace."

"Aye! but"—she sighed—"evil was good for me!
I lived, in all this land the boldest, worst,
Who braided up her hair the harlot's way.
That beauty Nature gave me I abased,
Selling it with a loveless heart to win
Wealth, and rich raiment, and the knees of men.

Oh me! my days splendid and sinful! Earth
Emptied her stores to pleasure me; they brought,
To buy my smiles, their Tyrian purple webs,
Their Myrrhine cups, their silks, their sards, their nard,
Drachmas, and darics, shekels, sesterces;
And slaves to fan my sleep, and gilded chairs
To bear me to the Temples and the feasts.
I, that am still and sane to-day, have led
Revels so mad the shamed stars drew the clouds
Over their argent faces;—Chinnereth
Burned with our cressets; and the water-way
Ran to its brink red with our chalice dregs.
And Syria groaned and fierce Samaria surged,
And wild mobs clamoured round the Palace-gates
While in these arms Cæsar's drugged satraps dreamed,
Prætor, and Procurator. Nay! hear all!
Not Latins only; no, nor Greeks alone;
Nor Jew, nor Idumæan; for my name,
My golden infamy, grew East and West,

Till Rome and Athens heard; and Tyre and Crete;
And Cyprus; and the Isles, and Media,
Not less than Magdal and Tiberias,
Talk of the Miriam of Galilee,
The Harlot with the long black braided hair
Who melted hearts in spiced pomegranate wine—
Than Alexandrian Queen more prodigal,—
And laughed their wealth to want, and trod their pride
Under her 'broidered sandals; and took toll
Of goods and gear, wasting in one wild bout
The Temple's wealth; till,—like that rose-faced One
Of Memphis, I had reared a pyramid
With but one block from each who fawned on me.
Sir! such was I, that play thy hostess here,
With these white shards, which saved me, in my lap.
Reverend and grave thou show'st: if thy will be
Now to depart, hearing these stained lips speak,
Thou shalt have praise, not blame, from Miriam."

"Child!" soft he said: "I hail the stately ship
Safe from all storms, anchored in quietness!
I hail the fair white hind, flower of these woods,
Fled from the wolves of sense, which tore her flesh!
I hail the gentle River, stayed and vexed
By crag and ledge, smooth-gliding at the last,
'Mid fruitful fields and dropping blooms, to find
Calm consummation in the accepting Sea!
I hail thy heavenly beauty, purged, to prove
Grace and not Plague to men! Oh, thou that art
Thine own high Conqueror, and hast set foot
On the Eight Noble Paths, an old man's lips
Low at thy hem, praise thee and honour thee!
Yet, tell me, Lady! how the new days came."

"He would have spoken so; so did He speak,
So speaking He did heal me!"—murmured she;
Then said aloud—"Learn thou that Nazareth
Cast forth her glory, flung her star away;

Forgot those good years when His fellowship
Made her air sweeter and her heavenly sky
Diviner, those fair years when all might hear
The mallet of 'The Carpenter' at work,
While in His holy soul He built the frame
Of Truth's high kingdom here—fitted the beams
Of such a Temple as the Eternal Love
Would dwell in. One ill Sabbath, when He came
Journeying by Sychar, new from seeing John—
John the Forerunner, who had surely said
'This is the Christ to be!'—He entered in
That synagogue thou sawest on the hill;
And stood to read.* The Chazzân drew the scroll
Forth from the silken curtains of its ark,
Unrolled the great Megillah to the page
Marked for the day, giving Esaias out,—
And, from the Prophet, Jesus spake these words:—

* The ground on which this synagogue stood at Nazareth was for some time owned by the Author, with the purpose of establishing a hospital there, which but partially succeeded.

'THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME. BECAUSE HE HATH ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR: HE HATH SENT ME TO HEAL THE BROKEN-HEARTED; TO PREACH DELIVERANCE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERING OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND; TO SET AT LIBERTY THEM THAT ARE BRUISED, TO PREACH THE ACCEPTABLE YEAR OF THE LORD.'

"This He did read, and spake, in majesty,
That which was true, as afterwards all knew,
'I am your Promised Prophet, Priest and King!'
Whereat they stormed, brake into bitter wrath,
Drave forth their Rabbi with the heavenly face,
Had will to kill Him,—being but 'Carpenter'
Who made Himself Messiah; had fierce mind
To fling Him down the steep; but He passed through,
And went His way.

"That was the day we rode
Up from Sebastë towards Tiberias,

And, on my wrist a damning splash of blood
From throat of one my angry lover stabbed
At mid-feast, in the madness of the wine.
'Twas there, at Kenna, 'mid my thickest sins,
Red outwardly with murder, inwardly
Black to the heart's core with wild wickedness,
Dwelt in by all the seven dark devils of Hell,
I saw my Lord! Oh, first I saw my Lord!
And, Sir! I heard His voice. Was one we knew
Steward to Herod—(for my revellers
Were men of Antipas) who stayed Him there—
Bent for Capernaum from Nazareth—
Praying swift succour for a dying child,
And urging fervently. While we made halt
To witness, tenderly the Master turned
With look ineffable, and gazed; and spake:
'Go! Thy Son liveth!'

"Whom I saw,—with eyes

Which never have forgot, nor will forget
Till Heaven's day shows me Him again—was one
Of a commanding stature *—beautiful—
Bearing such countenance, as, whoso gazed,
Must love, or fear. Wine-colour shone His hair
Glittering and waved,—an aureole folded down,
Its long rays lighted locks,—which fell, and flowed,
Fair-parted from the middle of His head,
After the manner of the Nazarites.
Even and clear His forehead; and the face
Of dignity surpassing, pure and pale
As the Greek's marble, but flushed frequently
With the bright blood of manhood. Nose and mouth
Faultless for grace, and full and soft the beard,
Forked, of the hazelled colour of His hair:
The great eyes blue and radiant; mild as sky
Of spring-time after rain, yet terrible
As lightning leaping sudden from that sky,

* Taken from the letter of Lentulus.

When He rebuked. In admonition calm;
In tender hours each word like music's soul
Heard past the sound! Not ofttimes seen to smile,
More oft to weep; yet of a lofty cheer
Commonly—nay, of playful raillery
And swift wit, softened with sweet gravity.
Straight-standing like a palm-tree; hands and limbs
So moulded that the noblest copy them:
Among the Sons of Men fairest and first.

"Friend! shall you think one remnant of myself,
One shred of that wild will was Miriam's,
One pulse of the quick blood wont to be stirred
By passion, and the goodly shapes of men
Moved me, when, on the sight of Him, I left
My litter, and my Lover, and my Life,
And followed in His footsteps? Pray thee, know
Mortal desire as well might reach at stars
As woman's eye, and woman's wish climb up

To such far height of starry majesty;—
By that impassable blue of Holiness
Endlessly separate! But love?—Oh, aye!
Swift, strong, supreme, consuming, final love!
With such a worship filled, such reverence,
The heart had knees, and bowed; the soul had eyes
Which veiled themselves at gaze; the mind had mind
To die for Him; the body burned to grow
His temple. Heart, soul, body, mind, all His
For ever and for ever!—at first sight,—
In some fair newer World, shown possible
At that first sight. And in such world I live
From that time, on the road of Galilee,
When in my breast the seven dark devils dwelt,
And round my wrist the blood of Pappus clung:
And that old life seems like a feather dropped
From free bird's wing—mine, yet no longer mine:
And in the air of sweet new life I soar
Singing and soaring with the joy He taught.

"Wherefore, I followed to Capernaum,
One in His lengthening train—the last and least—
Unnoticed; for I cast aside my webs
Of Coan, and my torques of Roman gold
At Kenna—and put on the *mitpachath*
Râdîd and *tsaiph*, dressed as our peasants use
Along the Lake. So did I see Him teach
Day after day; and in the Synagogue
Behind the women's lattice, heard the Law
Read to the congregation by such lips
As lit its mighty line with meanings new,
Like when the Moon swims, full, into the Night,
And what was dark grows clear, and what was void
Peopled; and, white and straight, the road regained
Winds plain and easy through the illumined land.
Also I saw them bring the sick to Him,
The maimed and miserable, and wretches torn
With plaguing devils,—less to dread than mine!—
Whom all He healed, comforting them with words

Of sovereign power, calming their cries and griefs;
As when the Mother's bosom charms to smiles,
Before its tears are dry, an infant's wail.
A woman lay in Simon's house, alight
With fever's fire. I saw Him take her hand,
Quiet the leaping blood, still the hot heart,
And lift her, cool and whole. I heard Him teach,—
Sitting in Simon's boat, moored by those sands
Which fringe Bethsaida—making plain and known
That farther Kingdom, nigh unto us all,
Yea, 'at our very gates.' And, when He passed
At nightfall to the Mountain, communing
With Heaven, which loved Him, and His own high soul,
Under the stars—less touched by taint than they!—
It was as though another golden Sun
Set from our eyes: till darkness fled again
And brought back Dawn, and that diviner light
Shed from Him.

"Ah, the Kingdom!—We, of old,
Being the people of this land, had served—
If service were—that God of Abraham
Mild to His own, but smiting enemies,
Hewing them hip and thigh, for Israel:
That Lord of Moses, awful on the Mount
With thunders, and red lightnings, and the Law:
Seen in the Burning Bush; riding the storm;
A jealous, dreadful, distant God. We lived
Obeying—if we did obey—for fruit
Of earthly goods; or, if in after time,
Then, for our children's children. But He taught;
And, lo! ourselves to share! Another world
Hidden within, without, beyond! He took
Terrors away, and showed us Life for Death,
Mercy for sacrifice, and Love for Law.
For that dread JAH, ruling o'er Israel,
A Father Universal, marking not
Gentile from Jew, or fair from swart, or great

From small; but holding all alike; and heard—
An ever-present Lover, Lord, and Guide—
In conscience and the silence of the breast.
Perfect and Pure, and loving love of such;
And willing all men such; but waiting long,
Far-suffering, large, compassionate, aware;
Making suns rise on evil and on good,
Rains fall on just and unjust. Look! one word!
And like the walls of Jericho which fell
To music, or a sunshine-parted cloud,
He burst the bars; He lightly lifted up
Earth's painted veil, and showed us,—close beyond,
Infinite, clear,—eternal life, decreed
Not for to-morrow, or hereafter—no!—
Already round, and in, and over us,
Already ours to enter and possess;
Always existing, always nigh; shut off
Some little while by sense, which having eyes,
Sees not; and, hearing, hears not; for some while

By body darkened. But He said: 'Fear not
Those who can kill the body, and, on that,
Have nothing they can do!' So did we learn,
Walking in those dear footsteps, scorn of Death
Which could not keep its Dead, if He bade yield,
But is Life's gate-porter, holding the keys
To larger Worlds and larger:—'Many mansions
Are in My Father's House!' this would He say
With great eyes on the stars.

"Thus did He bring
Our glad souls daily, by His glorious words,
Into the Kingdom of the Spirit. There
The sorrowful and shamed are comforted;
The humble are exalted; and the meek
Inherit good. The pure in heart see God;
The merciful find mercy. Those that wept
Dry their glad eyes; the peacemakers have
praise;

And they who hungered after righteousness
With righteousness are filled. No dream! no draught
Of Fancy's frenzied wine-cup; ecstacy
Of musing drugged with Faith's fine mandragore!
But the words true as daylight; plain and straight
The way as paths in meadows; clear the voice
Calling to airs celestial, as of Morn
Bidding with breezy lips the World awake.
Surer than any joy the heart can know
Bliss of that sudden hour when each for each
Knows Heaven so nigh! Only to let go Earth,
To let go, listen, love, and have:—for then
The Kingdom came! Came! and we did not need
To merit, or to seek, or strive, or wait:
We needed but to know Him one with God,
And we with Him, and then His peace was ours!
We heard Him utter 'Fear not, little flock!
It is your Father's joy to give to you
The Kingdom.'

" Journeying hither didst thou mark
The two-horned hill which overhangs our Sea,
Hattîn? And, how, beneath his nearer peak
Spreads a fair upland, rimmed with rounded banks
Where nebbuks glisten, and dark junipers,
Rose-laurels blow, and mallows; and soft grass
Carpets with lily-sprinkled green the spot?
One day, before the Dawn, thither He went
And drew His Twelve with Him, those who should be
Close to His counsels. Then, He named them His
To come and go in all the cities here—
Preaching The Kingdom—and beyond:—and be
Beginnings of a new-established State,
Greater than States, and governing all States;
Which should not have for boundaries the seas,
Mountains or streams, nor any border-line
By bloody sword-point traced; and should not have
Armies nor tributes, treasuries nor crowns.
But, overleaping races, realms, and tongues,

Thrones, zones, and dominations, lands, and seas,
Should clasp in one wide confine all those hearts
Which seek and love the Light, and hail the Light
Shining from secret Heaven, by Him revealed
First-born of Heaven, first soul of Human souls
That touched the top of Manhood, and—from height
Of godlike, pure, Humanity—reached God.
To this end was He sent, for this made known
Life beyond death, Love manifest through Law,
And God no name, no angry judge, no 'Jah,'
But Spirit, worshipped in the spirit; One
With His sweet spirit, and with ours, through His;
Unseen, unspeakable, not to be known
By searching; being beyond all sight, speech, search;
But Lord and Lover of all living things,
King of the Kingdom!

"And a multitude
Followed Him to the Mountain, gathering

By troops and companies, on bank and mead,
Heedless of all things save His gracious words,
Till all the grass was blotted with great bands
Of gladsome people, clad for holiday,
Like divers-coloured flowers; and, all around,
Dark eager faces of ten thousand folk—
Men, women, children—made a sunlit throng
So thick, so talk-full, on the asphodel,
The frightened eagles fled their crags—the snake
Slid to his hole, the wolf and panther hid
Ashamed of blood. But gentle things of Earth,—
The crowned lark, and the dove, and mountain-hare,—
'Ware of some new good word thro' man to them—
Listened in thickets. And the Morning dawned
Amice of summer gold—her loveliest—
To meet His holy footsteps on the Hill.
And there, from that fair Sinai, with voice
Sweeter than Morning's breath—He gave to us
The New Commandments.

"Eight are blest—He taught—
Of that dim Kingdom,—which men thought would march
In worldly pomp, bringing Messiah girt
With the Lord's sword, triumphant; His right hand
Teaching Him terrible things; all Earth to hail
Israel re-throned with scarlet and with gold;
The Sea to pour her pearls and corals forth
At foot of David's Heir! And, lo! the truth!—
The Kingdom come on that soft mountain-slope,
Not with the battle-trumpets, not with neigh
Of war-horse flecked with purple foam, and neck
Clothed with the thunder; but by this mild voice
Telling how lowly souls shall be the Lords
Of the New Kingdom; and the Sorrowful,
The meek, the seekers after righteousness,
The merciful, the just, the peacemakers,
And they who for their brother's sake, and Right,
Have suffered persecution. Oh, Sir! think;

In that one mountain morning—at one word—
All our World changed! Poverty rich! sick hearts
Comforted! those who weep to laugh and sing!
This Earth the Anteroom to neighbouring Heaven;
Wise souls its salt; pure souls its lamps, set high
Like cities upon hills, like candlesticks
Lighting the house! 'So let them shine,' He said:
'That men see your good works, and glorify
Your Father in the heavens!' Next He did teach
How the quick Spirit makes true living Law,
Under the letter: how the unkind thought
Hath, knifeless, murdered; how the altar-gift
Lies vain and hateful when the hand which gives
Hath wrought some brother wrong. 'Leave there,' He said,
'Thy gift before the altar! go thy way,
Be reconciled with him: then bring thy gift!'
Deep in our midmost He laid bare the seeds
Of wrongfulness; bade us wrench root away,

Not idly pinch a blossom; since the eye
Which lusteth, and the wish that would have wrought
The full sin, short of sinning. Therewithal,
Grave words of grace for women, marriage-bonds
Not to be lightly loosed: nay, and no oath
Oft-taken, since Truth's oath is 'Yea' and 'Nay,'
And all words spoken go to one great ear.
Next, sternly-sweet, he snatched the hasty blade
From black Revenge; bade vanquish Hate by Love;
Resist not evil; turn the other cheek
To whoso smites; cherish an enemy
That, peradventure, he may grow to friend;
If not,—then, being of our Father's mind
Who hath no enemies, but makes His dawns,
Each time He makes them, for the good and ill,
Giving to graceless ones, till they learn grace,
'Perfect, as He is perfect.' Then, He taught
Almsgiving, modesty, simplicity
And solitude to praying: spake Himself

That *we* may speak upon our knees, and know
Enough is said to that Divinest mind
Which saw our needs, and did provide for them
Ere the lips stirred. Furthermore, soft He talked
Of this world's fleeting treasures 'where the moth
And rust corrupt; and thieves break thro', and steal,'
Counted beside true wealth of worthy deeds,
Of loving service rendered, and fair days
Lived blameless, like to sweet airs passing by.
Also, for foolish quest of fitful gain,
For meat, and drink, and raiment, and much heed
Of earthly gear, tenderly shamed He us,
Pointing with finger at those little birds
Perched nigh, or lightly flitting. 'See!' said He,
'Your Father feedeth them, who gather not,'
And, therewith, from his foot a scarlet stalk
Of martagon He plucked, with wind-flowers,—
(Oh, happy blossoms! blown to help Him teach)—
Bidding us mark how great King Solomon,

For all his glory, was not clad like those ;
And how, if grass on the lone mountain-side
Grows unforgotten, garlanded so rich
From Heaven's full almonry ; and thrush, and finch
Feed daily from Heaven's hands, it could not be
Man should go bare, poorer than fowls of air,
Sadder than field-blooms. 'Ye have need of these,'
Gently He said : 'and these things shall be given :
But seek ye first the Kingdom ! seek ye first
The treasure of the Kingdom, righteousness !
Other things shall be added.'

"Therewithal,
He told how we should seek ; not thrusting in
As if Heaven heard the loudest cry ; as though
The gateway of the Kingdom must be forced,
And a path pushed over the fallen ones ;
But foremost by Renunciation, first
By good will to be last, by help, not haste ;

By eagerness not to be saved, but save.
'Judge not, that ye, too, be not judged!' He said:
'For, as ye judge ye must be judged.' And then,
Proclaimed how none seek vainly: soon or late
The seeker finds, the asker hath, the knock
Makes the latch lift, whose ever be the hand.
'Else'—tenderly He smiled, and wistful gazed
On mothers suckling black-eyed babes, and sires
Holding their brown boys high to see and hear,
Halving one barley-crust—'else were you men
Being evil; and so gentle, not the less,
To these your children; kinder to bestow
Than the Bestower! more to praise than God!'
At this—as who well knew what idle things
Children will ask—and men—he drew, in gold,
Plain as the Sun's long line across the Lake,
Our road to follow: 'WHAT YE WOULD THAT MEN
SHOULD DO TO YOU, DO YE LIKEWISE TO THEM!
THE LAW IS THIS, THE PROPHETS THIS!'

"We came
Flocking behind Him, down that Mount's green side,
And through the Vale of Doves, past Hattîn's peak,
Over Bethsaida to Capernaum,
A joyous people, heart-whole with His words;
Like sheep knowing their shepherd, gladly led
To fold from pasture.

"More than all He wrought
Journeying, or in His city, those dear words
Uttered upon the Mount, stripped my soul bare,
Showed me myself. Yet He would make us see
Power hand in hand with Wisdom and with Love:
For, next morn, down our silver Mere He sailed
To Nain, by Endor; where a rugged road
Winds, under Tabor, to the village-gate,
By tangled sidra-trees, and sepulchres
Cut in the rock for the old dead and new.
And, when we neared the gateway, lo! a throng—

Wailing, with covered mouths, dust on their heads,
Clad in sad garments—bore a dead man forth,
The one son of a widow. She, a-mort,
Broke with such woe as hath no help on earth,
Followed the painted coffin where he lay
Who was her glory and her good in life,
With those young, helpful, loving hands tight-bound
Never to help again! and sweet boy-face
Swathed in the grave-cloth, sightless. But her eyes
Fixed on his face thro' the fast-trickling tears
Which still she wiped away, lest sorrow cheat
Love from one last dear moment of the Dead.
Whom Jesus marked; and, while we held aloof,
(Since 'tis uncleanness if one touch a corpse,)
He laid His gentle palm upon the bier,
And bade its bearers stand. Then, speaking sweet
To that sad Mother, 'Weep no more!' He said,
And gazed upon the Dead—gazed—gathered up
Pity and Power and Grace in one great look,

Which beamed so tender and so masterful
Hardly we marvelled at what next befell:
For, while the hushed crowd closed, softly we heard,
'Arise, young Man! I say.' The Dead sate up,
And with his own hand drew the face-cloth off,
And stared; and murmured words; and reached his arms
To Jesus, and stepped, trembling, from the bier.
And, while fear fell upon us, lo! the Boy
Led, living, to his Mother, and her arms
Locked round him; not the dark walls of the Tomb!
But only Jesus of that multitude
Silent, and calm, and smiling.

"Then I knew
My Master and my Lord, and, all my heart
Burned so with worship that the blessed flame
Purged it of sin, and shame, and sorrow,—left
Only the gold behind of grateful ache
To praise and thank and love and honour Him;

To follow Him with humblest service still
Through life and death. That night He lay at meat
In Simon's house, in my own city here,—
It stands there yonder with the three white domes—
And, 'midst the others, I, too, entered in,
Bearing my box, the costliest thing I owned,
Holding much precious spikenard, subtly pressed
From flower and root of delicatest growth
By some far river in thy distant Hind."

"I know"—the Buddhist said—"that sumbul tree,
The 'jatamansi.' And our Indian Bee
Stays in her flight, full-laden, but to plunge—
Honey-drunk—in the perfumed wealth of it."

"Sir! it is sweet as were all words from Him;
The pity of Heaven made fragrance! When I stood
Unnoticed at His feet, dropping hot tears
Which ran on them, wiping my tears away

With these unbraided hairs, ashamed to moist
Such sacred palms with water from such source,
I would not merely lift the seal of silk
That shut the casket's lid, and spill the spice,
Lest somewhere, afterwards, some others use
My box,—His box,—for something ill again.
But on the stones I broke the dainty work,
And from these ruined fragments poured forth all
Over His feet, with many a fervent kiss
Adoring, and anointing. Then, there spread
The long-imprisoned spirit of that balm
To every quickened nostril at the feast,
And he, that was its Master, spake—half-heard—
'My guest, the Prophet, being such, should wist
Who and what manner of a wench it is
Which toucheth him, for she is Miriam!'
And I,—who in my pride and sin of old
Had cursed the Pharisee; grown wiser now,
Humbler, and conscious of my shame, and cleansed

From my seven devils—gathered meek these shards
And prayed him pardon, and was turned to go."

"More grace thou hadst, fair Daughter! than thy
Jew,"
Broke in the Indian.

"Nay, Sir! but I saw,
Blacker than Simon, how my sins must show
At those white feet! Then my Lord, piteously,
Gazed on me, took my wrist, and drew me back;
And, while I kneeled beside Him—glad to drop
My long black guilty hairs over mine eyes—
Searchingly spake He: 'Simon! answer me!'

"'Rabbi! speak on,' the Pharisee replied.

"My sweet Lord said: 'There lived a creditor
Had debtors twain: one owed five hundred pence;

The other fifty. Having nought to pay
He did forgive them both. How sayest thou;
Which debtor loved him best?'

"'I shall suppose,'
Murmured the Feast-master: ''twas he to whom
The Creditor remitted most.'

"My Lord
Smiled and spake soft: 'Aye, thou hast rightly judged!
Look on this woman well! I—being thy guest—
Lacked foot-water of thee; she made it good,
Washing my feet with tears: lacked linen cloths
To wipe them; and she made it good with locks
Of untressed hair: lacked guest-kiss on the cheek;
She with a hundred kisses made it good,
Rained on my feet, and then a hundred more;
Not ceasing from the time I entered in:

Lacked on my head that oil which should anoint,
But she upon my feet hath spilt the wealth
Of kingly spikenard. Wherefore, this I say;—
Her sins—her many sins—are wiped away,
Even as from these my feet her tears were wiped;
FOR SHE LOVED MUCH! But where forgivingness
Is little, love is little.' Oh, with that,
Made He from Simon, and upon me bent
Those eyes that mastered Death at Nain; those eyes
That melted at the children on the Mount;
Those eyes, like stars, with love for radiant beam.
And—ah!—beyond all music ever heard—
Fell dulcet on mine ears: 'Go thou in peace!
Thy faith hath saved thee! Go in peace! Thy sins
Are all forgiven!'

"They who sate at meat
Muttered thereat: 'Who is this Nazarene
Also forgiveth sins! Who?——'

"But He turned
Tenderly once again; and spake again,
'Thy faith hath saved thee! Go in peace! Thy sins
Are all forgiven!'

"And, from that glad hour,
Followed I Him, and ministered to Him;
And found myself alive who had been dead,
And saved by Love, who dwelt so lovelessly."

BOOK IV.

The Parables.

"OFTTIMES, dear Lady! while I listened close"—
Next morn, the Indian said:—"loath, by one stop,
To mar such noble music—I had will
To tell thee how the great Tathâgata
Spake many things in one mind with thy Lord.
Methought I heard our holy Books unroll,
Line after line, as thou didst featfully
Recite those sayings on the Mount. He, too,
Bade us not hate, but love; and conquer Hate
With Love; and let light cares of Life go by
Careless, because it is a show, which cheats;
And earthly treasures fade; and he is rich
Who lays up riches, in the Realm beyond,
Of deeds done well, and gentle service wrought,
And days without injuriousness. Mark, too,
Our Buddha would not know of enemies

More than thy Master. He commanded us,
'If one upon the left shall wound thy hand,
And one upon the right shall bathe thy hand
With sandal-oil, and kiss it, bear to each
The same mild heart! So shall the smiter love,
Or—if not—vainly hate thee!' Charity,
Mercy, and meekness, taught he:—for Love's sake
Utmost renunciation. Once, it fell
Buddh to a starving tigress gave his flesh;
Not fearing loss, for never can Love lose.
Yet, truly, nowise have we known before
Wisdom so packed and perfect, as thy Lord's,
Giving that Golden Rule that each shall do
Unto his fellow as he would have done
Unto himself; for, then, this Earth were *Heaven*,
And equity in every breast throned *King*.
Also, right joyous goes His doctrine; glad
'Mid Life's sad charms, and swift vicissitudes,
And Death's unshunned and hard perplexities

Which make us bear to live. But, Buddha held
Life was long sorrow, ignorantly prized,
Grievously reassumed from change to change;
Whirling sad souls upon The Wheel, unsaved,
Until they stay it, staying lust of days;
Ceasing to drink the false salt wave which breeds
Worse thirst—a wilder *Trishna*:—quit of quests,
And gliding, passionless and purged and sane,
Back to that Infinite where Silence lives.
OM MANI PADME!—'from the lotus-leaf
The Dewdrop sliding to the shining Sea,
When Sunrise comes!'"

But Mary's great eyes gleamed,
Crying: "Oh, Sir! in those good opening days
We were as glad as maids at marriage-time;
As jocund as the bird that hangs his heart—
Bursting with song—midway 'twixt Earth and Heaven,
And hath, to ravish it, the sky all his

Up to the utmost blue, and, green below,
The Earth his, down to that one dearest nook,
The little happy hollow in the grass
Where his mate listens on her warm grey eggs
In woven nest. So owned we two wide worlds,
Following behind Him, over Galilee.
Nay, and those never knew my Master's mind,
Nor touched the golden hem of what He taught,
Nor tasted honied lesson of His lips,
Who drew not from the treasure of those lips
Joyance to make him glad to live or die!
Wistful and woeful may well go, I know,
The days of those who, driven by the winds
Of strife, and avarice, and lust of eye,
Chase, what shall never be attained on Earth,
Contentment with the joys which are of Earth.
Who knows, but Miriam of Magdala,
How the red bubbles, bursting on the wine,
Foretell, at the cup's bottom, bitterness?

Truly, such souls are like our 'gal-gal' * here—
If thou hast seen it,—the wild artichoke,
Which putteth forth brave branches in the spring,
Dying at autumn into dusty globes
That break, and fall, and roll, all helplessly,
Ten score together in a leaping crowd,
O'er hill and vale, bounding like things possessed;
Till the thorns take them, or the wrathful sea.
The Desert-rider reins his frightened beast,
As 'the accursëd' whirls, and cries in scorn:
'Oh! gal-gal! whither goest thou to lodge?'
And the dry, miserable, ball replies:
'Where the wind lodgeth for the night, I lie!'

"But we, who learned of Him the happy way,
Whom never once again Earth's winds can drive,
What is it if we die? whose eyes have seen
There is no Death! What is it if we live

* Called by the Arabs of Palestine *el-akkûb*.

A little woe-begone, when He hath passed
Patiently all our path, changing its stones
To rubies, and to rose blooms all its thorns,
With bright blood of His vainly-wounded feet?
What lover of Him shall be sad again
Seeing the Father through Him, touching hands
Of that large love which reaches out from Heaven,
In His pierced palms? He told us not one bird
Folds failing wings, and shuts bright eyes to die,
But That which gave their stations to the stars,
And marked the Seas their limits, and the Sun
His shining road, signed soft decree for this,
And did in pity plan kind consequence.
'Yet you'—lightly He spake—'are of more worth
Than many sparrows!' Oh, good Friend! that soul
Hath done with sadness which knows Christ aright;
Not as Fear reads, but as quick Love reveals.
Also I think the woest shall scarcely miss
At end of evil, when Despair will lead

Souls to His feet, which would not come for Love.
Hardly, I hope, shall bloody Herod fail,
Nor Judas, who betrayed Him with the kiss,
Nor Pilate, who, for Cæsar, saw Him slain;
Nor any, at the last; since Grace and Power
Unmeasured, which forbid men's hearts to hate,
Themselves can never hate, nor finally,
See their sweet purpose foiled.

"But, in those days,
We were the Children of the Bride-chamber,
That could not fast, nor weep! Joy walked with us!
Mark with thine eyes what Land this is in spring!
The meadows cloth of gold, damasked and decked
With silk-leaved country-blossoms, and the hills
Girt with green forests, and with budding vines,
Their feet set deep in barley-fields and groves
Of fig and olive; where another world
Of sunshine-loving people live—the Doves,

The painted finches, and the crested larks,
Brook-tortoises, and storks, with busy swarms
Of banded bees, crickets, and creeping things,
Nowise forgotten, taking share of Earth.
He led us—Lord of lovely pastorals—
Through these fair paths, grown to seen Paradise,
Heaven being so near. Women and children drew—
Bright with the light of Love's new kingdom come—
Into His train; and gave Him laughing guards
Of little ones, who clustered round His knees—
Wiser and bolder than we others were—
Of dark-eyed wistful Syrian wives and maids
Glad to be poor, because He loved the poor
And made them wealthy with His word. The Lake,
The lonely peaks, the valleys, lily-lit,
Were synagogues. The simplest sights we met—
The Sower flinging seed on loam and rock;
The darnel in the wheat; the mustard-tree
That hath its seed so little, and its boughs

Widespreading; and the wandering sheep; and nets
Shot in the wimpled waters,—drawing forth
Great fish and small:—these, and a hundred such,
Seen by us daily, yet never seen aright,
Were pictures for Him from the page of life,
Teaching by parable.

"For, nowise else,
Taught He the people; since a light is set
Safest in lanterns; and the things of Earth
Are copies of the things in Heaven, more close,
More clear, more near, more intricately linked,
More subtly, than men guess. Mysterious,—
Finger on lip,—whispering to wistful ears,—
Nature doth shadow Spirit. Subjects, kings,
Diversities, degrees, prophets, and poets:
Lovers, together drawn invisibly
Like orbs that cleave across the Void; the babe
Who, coming helpless, finds its mother's breast,

Safe nursery and sweet food; the seed which dies
That it may live, laughing with lightsome blade
Death's dread away; the Darkness which would daunt
Save that it shows—what Day concealed—the stars;
The sleep which gives us back the body's strength,
But leaves the dreaming soul sleepless and 'ware;
Comforting nightly with grave's counterfeit;
Death without dying—living, but not Life!
The steadfast onward-moving march of change
In use and beauty; yea! and what obstructs
Of harm and evil,—for our World must grow
By Love's slow conquest of the stubborn will,
Free to will wrongly:—these be parables
For ever murmuring wider wonders, hints
Of what hides inner, deeper. What is Like
Is Likely; and the Life to come will be
Of such a fashion as this Life to-day
Writes in still symbols. Did we deem our fields
Tilled for no crop save what the sickle reaps?

He made them show how Heaven's wise husbandry
Sets good seed growing; parts the tares and wheat;
Winnows the chaff away. Did some man find
Hid shekels in a field,—old buried gold
Forgot of mouldering owner in the tomb—
And buy the field, selling, for joy thereof,
All that he had? He made us therefrom see
How sweet it is to want all sweetnesses,
Winning the Sweetest;* and how cheap to own
What's priceless at a price; how light to part
With all we clove to once, gaining thereby
The treasure of the Kingdom. Did there come
Pearl-merchants out of Persia, trafficking
All their white findings for one moonlight gem,
Fished fortunate in Ormuz, or by reef
Deadly and ragged, of the Sea of Suph;
Fit to adorn the neck of Cæsar's wife?

* Cf. St. August. Confess., "*Quam suave mihi subito factum est carere suavitate, et quas amittere metus fuerat jam dimittere guadium erat; Oh Vera Tu, et summa suavitas!*"

He made them teach us how to fling aside
Small pearls for great. That corn, sown secretly,
Unseen at eve, but, when we passed at morn,
Greening the headlands, 'twas His text to tell
How still and sure the good deed grows i' the dark;
And shall not fail of fruit in his full time.
The shepherd whom we met in Gadara
Joyously striding as he brought to fold
That one lost lamb out of the hundred sheep
On his own shoulders, leaving lone, meanwhile,
The ninety and nine, safe in fat pasturage,
Passed piping on, not knowing he was grown
Type for us of the Eternal Love which seeks
Strays of the flock; and will not have them lost
For all its saints, and will not spare its toil,
'Mid thorns and thickets, till it find, and save;
Then makes more joy in Heaven for one lost sheep
Brought home, than all the folded ewes and rams
Knee-deep in grass of Paradise. And, once—

New from Percea, o'er the star-lit sea
Sailing with Simon to His city's gates—
We spied a marriage-party:—torch, and lamp,
And cresset, flaring with great Cedar-knots,—
Dancing like fire-flies through Capernaum
To jocund music of much pipe and drum.
But—for the Bridegroom tarried—certain maids
Had slumbered; let their lamps die; and their wail—
'*Alalalai!* no light! and, lo, he comes!'—
Was loud, because the wedding-doors stood closed.
Small thought those slothful damsels had, their rout,
Hither and thither hurrying, gowns ungirt,
Lamps swinging lightless, and th' uncared-for cry,
'Oil! Sisters! Lend us oil!' should thesis give
For fable of the Wise and Foolish ones;
The souls that wait and watch; the souls that drowse,
Letting Life's wick burn down; till midnight comes,
And here's the Bridegroom, with his feastful friends,
But, look! no light! and entrance quite forbid!

'Watch, therefore,' spake He, 'for ye know nor day,
Nor hour!'

"Yet most He loved to teach of Love.
Wherefore, when tale was of a certain man
Dwelling—(we knew him)—by Tiberias,
That had two sons. And one, the Prodigal
Who asked his portion, gathered it, and went
To some far country, where he wasted all
In riotous living; till the ill-times fell,
And he had nought, and herded swine, and filled
His belly with the husks. Sitting at meat
In Simon's house, our Master took this tale,
And featly decked it forth with Wisdom's wealth,
Relating how that son 'came to himself'
And cried: 'I will arise, and go unto
My Father, and will say that I have sinned,
Sinned against Heaven, and, Father! before thee,
And am not worthy to be called thy son,

Only thy hireling servant! Make me that!'
Then he arose, and came. And, oh! what heart
Throbbed not amongst us, while the Master told
Tenderly,—meaning all the World to hear,—
How—yet a long way off—his Father saw,
Saw him, and had compassion? Nay, he ran,
And fell upon his neck, and kissed the boy
Mouth to mouth; Father's lips on Son's lips pressed,
Staying his words of sorrowful self-blame
With dear impatience;—leading us to learn
That God's love runneth faster than our feet
To meet us stealing back to Him and peace,
And kisses dumb our shame, nay, and puts on
The best robe, bidding angels bring it forth,
While Heaven makes festival; for Angels' meat
Is happiness of Man.

"In such wise, He—
Plucking His themes, as Syrian girls pull flowers,

To spell dear names and speak the gentlest words,
From common wayside things in Galilee—
Taught us by Parable."

The Indian cried,
"Thou Wise One! who didst sojourn in the Wild;
And feed the swine from fairest hands; and ache
With hunger for thine own fine food of Truth,
With waste of Love and Life; and didst arise,
And find forgiving arms, and take that kiss
Silencing shame! Now doth thy bright soul wear
A better beauty than dead Pappus saw,
Or love-sick Prætors! Whence are words to thank
These words which teach me where thy Jesus filled
The leaf of wisdom in, and wrote for men
The name Lord Buddha would not say nor spell?
Sweet stories, nathless, might thy servant cite
From Buddha's lips, teaching, as these do teach,—
By speech of Ganges, not of Galilee,—

How good seed grows to good, ill seed to ill,
Secretly; and the Treasure of the Law
How well it is to buy it at World's cost
If all this World were chrysolite, and ours;
And how Death is not, being new life masked,
Lest we long overmuch to die, and lose
Purpose of Earth:—but Change, for ever Change!
From seed, by darkness, to the blade again;
From Life, by rest and recompense, to Life,
From forms, by Karma, to some other form;
Which wheel shall whirl, till the awakened soul
Like a caged callow eagle, passion-caught,
Knows itself; and, indignant, spreads its wings
For that unbounded Quiet where is Home.
Thus did Buddh teach; and high *Ahinsa's* rule
To do no wrong, but bear wrongs patiently,
Yet this to conquer Ignorance; to break
From sense; to find that farther, truer World
Which shines—thou sayest it—beyond the seen.

Yea! this to serve the Self, and save the Soul,
Reaching Nirvâna, where, what seemed so dear,
Love, lieth dumb as Hate; Life dead as Death;
And the vast voice of endless Ecstacy
Is silence, and its Day eternal dream.
Who reigneth at that centre of the cirque
Him named he not, nor would he lift to Him
Prayers which were vain, if th' All-Knowing loves,
If th' All-Loving knows. Denying not,
Affirming not; but finding no word fit
Saving the Wordless, the Immeasurable:
But thou, reporting from thy Master's mouth,
On that Void stretching from thought's farthest flight
As far into the purple deeps of Night
As the last star—and farther—dost inscribe
This mighty name of 'Love,' and biddest believe
Not law, not fate, not fore-ordainëd course
Hath moulded what we are, and built the Worlds;
But living, regnant Love; dimly discerned

In glories of this house of Earth we own,
Paved with green meads and seas, and roofed with Heaven;
Dimly discerned in lovely shows that live
To whisper lovelier wonders; youth and strength,
The light of lustrous limbs, and laughing eyes;
Man's might and woman's beauty; clouds and flowers,
Jewels and birds, and all fair things for use.
Nor will thy matchless Master have this Love
Marred any way by evil; any whit
Hindered by hating. Hate and Evil hang,—
So must I gather—but as darkness hangs,
When Dawn, which broadens, is not rosy yet.
It shall not fail to gleam, dispelling glooms.
And, for the lingering of that Sun and Love
Which is to brighten all, 'tis Night! we dream!
And Time and Doubt portions of that false dream!
Nor would thy Master have one little life
Forgotten of this Love Divine. He sees

His Father's universes clustering close
Round the poor bird which dies—to minister
With winds that fan it, and with dews that bathe;
Those viewless forces, holding worlds at work,
Subservient to the meanest thing, in life,
And death, and after dying. Therefore, more,
Much more to Man, Earth's Lord, and King of things,
Also, who enters, if I gather well—
Into this Kingdom, in thy Master's train,
Hath, for its secret, not to love himself;
Nor seek to save himself; nor—lonely—wend
Over dead duties and affections slain,
Towards such Nirvâna; but to cherish still
His neighbour as himself; and save his soul
By losing heed of it, in heedful care
That all his doings profit men, and help
The sorrowful to hope, the weak to stand:
With heart, soul, mind, and strength loving this God,
Whom yet I reach not, tho' the foot of thought

Treads step for step with Christ in Galilee.
How fits with such a God the loveless strife
Of all things living? In the jungle, look!
What slaughter! and without it not a meal
For the young vultures, or the tiger-cubs.
Nay, over all thy Realm of Love this rules;—
Each slays a slayer, and in turn is slain.
How fits, with Love, this, and the wrongs of men
Too desperate for any right to atone;
The woes too hard ever to recompense;
The dried, but dreadful, unforgotten, tears;
The agonies intolerable, yet seen,
Yet suffered (thou didst say so) by that Power
Who tends the little bird, but gives it o'er
Helpless and piping to the falcon's beak?
If these things need not be, doth He not play
With the poor Earth? Shall it not fling Him back
His after bliss, indignant? If aught lets
And He that made them cannot help His Worlds—

Or, only by slow schemes, and painful paths,—
Shall we not scorn to call Him powerful;
Or ask to see Him nearer, and know more ?"

"Wise Friend !" she sighed, "that which thou sayest now
Was—over-eager—said. One of our Twelve,—
One golden morning when the Earth seemed His—
By reason of those glorious works,—and Heaven
A Garden parted by the Blue, whose key
Hung at His girdle—pressed Him close, and spake:
'Show us the Father, Lord !' But He replied,
With grave eyes looking greatly past our light,
'No man, at any time, hath seen Him ! None !
Nor shall ye see Him nearer than by Me
Who am His Son !' And, on another day,
Spake He: 'So long hast thou been with Me here,
And not yet known Me, Peter ? Who hath seen
Him that was sent, hath seen the Sender.' Sir !

We did suppose,—what thy large learning holds,—
The Unnamed thereby shown the Infinite,
Incomprehensible, Unspeakable,
For ever and for ever unapproached,
And yet, for ever and for ever near
In loving immanence; revealed on earth
Doubtfully, as the minds of parents are
To ungrown children; most of all revealed
In days and deeds, in holy life and death,
And new life after death, of Christ our Lord.
But manifest—so did we read Him—here,
In whatso mirrors Love, the nursing Dove
Fasting to feed her couplets; the lone ewe
Battling against the eagle for her lamb;
The eagle's self, fierce to find meat to bear
Back to her nestlings; and the peasant-sires
Toiling that little ones fare well at home;
And mothers with the sucklings at their breasts,
And children tending joyously the old;

And he who helps the poor, and he that shares
Last measure of dates in the mid wilderness
With one that starves:—each tender deed and true,
Each word, thought, sacrifice, which helps the world,
By loving-kindness, use, and charity;
Nay, 'even one cup of water,' thus He said,
'Given in My name,' bring glimpse of God, and lead
Nearer and nearer to the Heart of Love.
Which shall be justified, when all is known,
And the Eternal Wisdom whispers,—glad,—
Its secret to the Soul, laughing to learn
Death was so friendly, and the toils of life
So fruitful for all living things; and pain
Seed of long pleasure; and our worst of woes
So like the foolish anguish of the Babe
Whereat the Mother, loving most, smiles most.

"Moreover, not by narrow Reason's ray
Shall this be ever compassed, but by light

Larger and brighter, shining from the heart.
And, in the house once, at Capernaum,—
His Twelve, disputing who was first, and chief—
He took a little child, knit holy arms
Round the brown, flower-soft boy; and smiled and said:
'Here is the first and chiefest! If a man
Will be the greatest, see he make himself
Lowest and least; a servant unto all;
Meek as My small disciple here, who asks
No place, nor praise; but takes unquestioning
Love, as the river-lilies take the sun,
And pays it back with rosy folded palms
Clasped round My neck, and simple head reclined
On his Friend's breast.'

"And, at another time,
When the pleased Mothers of the Lake would bring
Their infants to His knee; to touch that hand
Which touched the hands of Angels, and to take

Blessing from lips which spoke for Heaven;—those Twelve
Rebuked them, knowing not. But Jesus said:
'Suffer the little ones to come to Me!
Forbid them not! Heaven's Kingdom is of such.'
And then went on: 'Whoso shall not receive
The Kingdom as a little child, that Man
In no wise entereth in!' Friend! should we err
Deeming He meant the simplest souls see most?
Is there not wisdom in the witless Babe?
New-coming to this life, so wonderful,
Finding, without his pains, without his will,
The tender Mother waiting; the sweet stream
Of breast-milk flowing; and his soft place made;
With sunlight for his days; and stars and moon
To gem the curtains of his sleep; and flowers
To tempt his feet to walk; and birds to teach
Carols of country joy when he would sing;
The child doth question nought, but takes this wealth

Lavished upon him in the dawn of life
With quiet opening heart, glad to be glad.
So doth he grow and learn, yet shall not learn
Ever a higher wisdom than to cling
Close to the loving bosom kept for him,
Content to trust, careless to understand."

The grey sage said, with wrinkled brow bent low,
"Great is thy grace, oh, Lady Miriam!
Right surely hast thou won from those true lips
Learning's last word! 'Tis written in our books
Of Parabrahm, to shame all pride of mind,
'He is unknown to those who think they know;
And known to whoso know they know Him not.'
Yet, as thy fair speech ran, much wondered I
That, teaching how this heavenly Love hath heed
Of all flesh living; how we sons of men
Lie in its lap, all children, dear alike,
Elder and younger; near and far; white, black;

The Jew, Greek, Syrian, and Sidonian,
Arab, Egyptian :—nay, and Indian;
Thy Jesus did not quit, some little while,
His slender world shut here; those peasant-hearts
Poorly perceiving Him; those narrow brows
Knitted against Him in false Nazareth;
And that proud, bitter, murderess on the hill,
Slayer of Prophets, red Jerusalem,—
Which, as we heard, did spill His blameless blood.
Why wended not His holy feet to them?
To us? to any? who had listened well;
And, glad with light of such bright missioning,
Crowned Him a King, indeed; and given Him Earth
To fill and foison with His Father's will?"

She answered: "Once, from green Gennesaret
Passed He, with certain, to the neighbouring coasts
Of Tyre; and would not have that any knew,
But could not veil His greatness. Thou hast seen

Perchance,—or from far-travelled merchant heard—
How stately sits, how strong, how beautiful
That city on her Island of the Sea,
Tyre of the temples, girt with mighty walls,
Which glass themselves like rocks, majestical,
In the green wave laving their feet;—filled full
With ships that come and go,—white birds of the sea
Flown from the farthest verges of the earth,
Spreading or folding wing;—and noise of oars
And ropes, and singing of the merchantmen.
There stood He, on the stair of Melicerth—
God of the City—while there came and went
Folk, as I think, from all the East and West;
Another world of men and women; loud
With traffick, and strange tumults, and new tongues;
And gay with many-coloured garbs. We saw
The thronged streets paved with coral; booths and shops
Bursting with store; long strings of camels; slaves
Bearing red jars of byssus, sealed for Rome;

Hewn cedar logs for Greece; honey, and oil,
Barley and balm and calamus; great bales
Of gum and cassia; with blue-broidered work.
And Tyrian girls danced by, before His eyes,
Clad in the purple peplums; beating skins
Of drum and cymbal; wreathed with myrtle flowers,
Singing their wild way down to Ashtoreth,
The hundred-breasted Goddess of the Moon,
Worshipped with blood. Mild stood the Master there
Watching the busy bright-hued heathen life,
With eyes like those sea-waters, showing half,
Half hiding the deep wonders underneath.
Whom, as He gazed, with, who shall tell what thoughts?
A woman, in the Greek dress, did accost
Plucking His robe, and crying: 'David's Son!
I know Thee masterful and merciful,
Have pity on my child! A devil rends
Her tender flesh; but Thou, if Thou would'st come,
Could'st heal, and bring Thy servants peace and weal.'

Then He, grieved for the gilded wickedness
Of that fair city, fain for Galilee;
Answered: 'First must the children's mouths be filled!
It is not well to take the children's bread,
And cast it to the dogs!' At that, her eyes
Flashed with quick wit of anguish, and she cried:
'Truth, Lord! but crumbs fall, and the dogs may eat
The children's tearings!' Then beamed forth anew
That high look on His face, which comforted:
'For this thy saying go in peace!' He spake;
'Thy little Maid is healed!'"

And she was healed!

BREAK off, a little (he, who sings, entreats)
To mark the Master treading Tyre's proud streets;
For then, of all the days of all our years,
Since tale was kept of human hopes and fears,

Since first, through mists of eld, we mark Man climb
From flint and bronze to arts and aims sublime,
Subduing Earth, and stripping from the Sea,
By lordlier might, its power and mystery;
And gaining, race by race, with painful strife,
Slow steps to Law, and sweeter modes of life:—
Then, of all days, Times past and Times to be
Met—touched—and parted; taking silently
Such eye-glance as the Grecian boys might snatch,
One from another, in that antique match
When the enkindled torch went sparkling round,
And each fleet runner o'er the flying ground
Spent his last breath and strained his sinking limb
To bring it, safe and swiftly, on to him
Who—new, and girt and eager—waited near
That lighted brand one more quick stage to bear.
Then did this New Age from the Old Age take
Life's flambeau up; and with strong fingers shake
The sinking fire, and strike away the ash

Of Pagan blackness; making fresh rays flash
Whiter and brighter than what erst had beamed
When Attic grace and Latin lordship seemed
To hold our Earth for ever. Ponder well
What this white Tyre was, when the Writings tell
Jesus stood silent in her crowded ways;
Master and Victor, more than if the blaze
Of steel-clad legionaries at His heels
Had burst her gates; and rattling chariot-wheels
Had borne Him, splashed with scarlet conquest, high
Over her purple Punic Empery.
See, in the Prophet's scroll, how proud she sate,
Queen of the heathen, at her strong Sea-Gate:
"Oh thou!"—he saith—"at entrance of the Sea
Merchant for many peoples! haughtily
Wearing thy perfect beauty; with ships wrought
Of fir from Hermon, and of cedars brought
From Lebanon; and, for thine oars uncounted
Oak-trees of Bashan; and thy benches mounted

With ivories of Chittim; and thy sails
Sendal of Egypt, bellying to the gales
With broidered fringe, and blue and purple, pressed
From byssus of Æolia! Skilfullest
On all the waves thy timoneers in thee,
Thy grey-haired pilots, sailing every sea!
Zidon and Arvad made thee mariners;
Gebal thy caulkers; Lud and Phut and Perse
And Gammadim, thy men of battle tall,
Who hanged their helms and bucklers on the wall,
Gems for thy terrible beauty! Tarshish sent
Silver and tin to be thine ornament:
Javan and Tubal brought thee slaves, and brass
To mould thy market-vessels; those who pass
Out of Togarmah fetched thee, for thy fairs,
Mules and their riders; stallions stout and mares:
Dedan did traffick many a horn with thee
Of milky elephant, and ebony
From isles of Suph; Syria thronged trader, too,

For corals, emeralds, agates; and the blue
Of sea-fishes; thy mouth was fed with grain
Of Judah, out of Minnith's golden plain;
With honey, oil, and balm; with spice from Hind;*
And green Damascus would not be behind
For wine of Helbon, and white wool; and Dan
Sent thee bright iron; and the Ionian
Wine-pots and women-slaves. Kedar did graze
Her flocks to feast thee: for thy power and praise
Sheba and Raamah poured forth gums and gold;
Haran and Canneh, Asshur, Chilmad old,
Blue cloths and broidered work; and chests bound round
With cords—of cedar wood—wherein was found
Glorious apparel, wove with gilded thread,
And the worm's glistening film!"

So—it is said—

The ships did sing of her, on all the seas.

* "Pannag" is, no doubt, the Sanscrit *pannaga*, meaning "aromatic herbs."

Lovely and strong, in her twin majesties
Of spear and oar, she shone upon her Isle,
Replenished, very splendid. But the toil
Of tearful captives drove her glittering keels
Swift o'er the waves; at mills and water-wheels
Lydian and Lybian slaves, to keep her great,
Groaned their lost lives away with tears and sweat;
And—dark and cruel—at the altar-stair
Of dread Astarte, priests, their red arms bare,
For glory of the Goddess, pierced soft throats
Of Tyrian boys and girls; and,—girt with coats
Of sacrifice, mingling its wine and blood,—
Stained the white marble scarlet, where she stood.
And Woman had no place, nor parity,
Nor grace, with that lewd Lady of the Sea:
But, bought and sold, the maiden bloomed, to live
A Temple-thrall, and her dusk beauty give
Loveless, unloved. And the fierce statutes taught
Hatred to Foes; and vile advantage, wrought

By whatsoever wrong, or force, or fraud
Might spoil the Stranger.

In such midst our Lord
Patiently pacing, surely come to be
Gentle Destroyer of this Heathenry;
Teacher of truth, which, spreading slow, shall shake
The many-breasted Goddess down; and make
The captives free, and tear the accursëd knife
From priestly grip; and change to Queen and Wife
The trafficked Temple-harlot; aye! and bring
The Roman to his last of governing;
The Greek—proud of his glorious Gods—to hear
Over Ægean hills that voice of fear
Wailing "Great Pan is dead!" And from the tongue
Of Cæsar's self,—hereafter—shrewdly wrung
By scath and loss,—compel that yielding cry
Vicisti, Galilæe!

Now, go by
Those thrones of Tyre,—the old ill deeds and days—
Heedless and unaware! seeing Him gaze
Wistfully from their Temple-steps. No thought
How the mild eyes and silent steps have brought
End and Beginning!

Yet hath come the End!
Hath dawned Beginning!

Doth no ear attend?—
The sea-waves, softlier in the harbour swinging,
Take part with the sea-breezes, lightly singing:

PEACE BEGINNING TO BE,
DEEP AS THE SLEEP OF THE SEA,
WHEN THE STARS THEIR FACES FIND
IN ITS BLUE TRANQUILLITY:
HEARTS OF MEN UPON EARTH,

THAT RESTED NOT FROM THEIR BIRTH,
TO REST AS THE WILD WATERS REST
WITH COLOURS OF HEAVEN ON THEIR BREAST.

LOVE, WHICH IS SUNLIGHT OF PEACE,
AGE BY AGE TO INCREASE,
TILL ANGERS AND HATREDS ARE DEAD,
AND SORROW AND DEATH SHALL CEASE.
"PEACE ON EARTH AND GOODWILL!"
SOULS THAT ARE GENTLE AND STILL
HEAR THE FIRST MUSIC OF THIS
FAR-OFF, INFINITE BLISS!

BOOK V.

The Love of God and Man.

NEXT day, within the House at Magdala,
Sitting in fair discourse,—the Indian said:
"I know that thou must pass to bid me see
Thy Master done to death by evil men,
Blind to the light, in hard Jerusalem;
I think that thou wilt tell how,—ere He died—
(Who could not die—thou sayest—and did not die,
If thou hast seen Him living, being slain;)
He took back, twice and thrice, those keys from Death
Which lock the gates of darkness on mankind,
Till when His own hour came, Death ministered,
Meek servitor, leading that holy soul
Thither where it must go; and willed to go,
So He might finish what He was to be:
In all things Man (thou sayest), yet in all things

Divinely touching Heaven, fulfilling life,
And conquering ('twas thy word) the Unconquerable.
Now, gracious Lady! since these things be strange,
And 'tis a new day which my dim eyes see
Broader and brighter than could shine, I deemed,
Till Buddh came back; humbly I pray of thee
Who dwelled'st near this light, and hast this light
Large in thy happy eyes, and pure and clear
In thine assured spirit—make more plain
What was thy Master's teaching—with what Law
Set He the Old Law by? Whence take ye all—
Whose faces met His face,—the calm, the joy
Of such strong comfort as I mark, and praise,
And marvel at, and fain would understand?"

"Swift is the heart to seize," Mary replied—
"Slow is the tongue to utter things so high!
Hadst thou walked once with Him in Galilee,
Seen His face once; once, from His lips divine

Heard those commanding, certain, kind, clear words
Which answered ere we dared to ask, and spake
Straight to the thought, as if our souls went stripped,
Or wore for raiment crystal;—thou hadst known—
As we did know who loved and followed Him—
He was in all things such as we were—Man;
Yet, being Man, in nowise like to us:
Oh! no more like, than yonder palm-blossom—
Dropping its sudden plumelet from the crown
To spread and feather into golden rain—
Is like the root, the stem, the branch, the leaf
Whence, all at once, it burgeoned. Thou hadst known
How speech must fail, seeking to circumscribe
The purport of His mighty message here
With unavailing words; as if one dipped
A hand to empty deep green Galilee.
Only, if yet again that voice could sound,
Itself would be its own interpreter,
And lift thee to those heights of Love unseen

Where dwells our spirits, safe above the clouds;
Would light thy gladdened eyes with what lights ours,
Through Life, through Death, into the bliss beyond!

"Yet, for thy sake, and for His sweet Name's praise,
I will essay:

"Once, at Jerusalem,
While eager multitudes drank in His words,
The Sadducees had questioned Him; and asked
Touching a Jewish wife, whose husband died
Leaving no children; and, by Moses' law,
The second brother took her: and, again
Dying, the third; and, so the fourth, and fifth,
Down to the seventh. Last the woman dies
Childless by all—of all the equal spouse.
'Whose wife at resurrection shall she be,
All seven wedding her, and issue nought?'
So posed they, mocking at the Life to come.
But Jesus shamed them; showed them Holy Writ—

Forever in their false mouths—proving God
Lord not of dead but living; bade them know
Better His power, and plan, and mystery;
And multitudinous mansions of Love's House;
And this World little, and high Heaven so large
Where neither marriage is, nor mortal wish,
Nor selfish, lying tongues, speaking false speech
Of love; nor eyes that lose their lustrous light
With tears and vigils; nor the dread to part
Which, under warm gold of Love's folded wing,
Makes lovers shudder; nor true love mistook,
Nor ill love entertained; nor ever doubt,
Where destined spirits meet; nor ever death
Of love new-born, heart-holds abandoning,
But love undying, undivided, pure,
Perfect; in finer bonds, and nigher, bound,
Dearer delights and deeper joys; free souls
Linked as the Angels are, whose breath is Love,
And, for their sex another wonder.

"One,

Which was a Pharisee, said,—tempting Him;
Or, haply, learning Moses shrunk too small
To fill the new vast splendours opened so—
'Tell us the chief commandments of the Law!'
Then, as a jewel-merchant spreads forth gems,
And takes from all his treasures of the Deep,
The two great gleaming pearls of all the pearls
To set them, matchless, in the encircling gold
Shining apart;—from all their Law He plucked
These two chief precepts, sternly answering:

'THOU SHALT LOVE THE LORD THY GOD WITH ALL THY HEART, AND WITH ALL THY SOUL, AND WITH ALL THY MIND.'

"'This is the First and Great Command,' He said,
'And like unto it that which followeth it:

'THOU SHALT LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR AS THYSELF.'

"'All the Law hangs, and all the Prophets hang,
On these commandments,' spake He, 'on these two!'"

"So did our Lord, out of their own mouths, judge
Those hypocrites. He told how this Life makes
Veil and dim vestibule of larger life,
Eternal, boundless; and what statutes twain
Sway the commingling Realms so manifest:
Wherein, who loves his brother, seen and known,
Loves God unseen, unknown; and who, by faith
Finds the far Father in the close sweet Son,
Is one with both. Yet Faith, ofttimes He taught,
Was nowise bare believing; since belief
Comes hard or easy, as minds go: and He—
Not once ungentle to bewildered minds
Seeking for truth, and fearful lest they take
A wrong road in the maze—spake graciously
Even to one who, craving mercy, cried:

'Lord! I believe! help Thou mine unbelief!'
What Faith He asked of whoso entered in
The slave may have in bondage, if he lifts
Eyes of sad hope; th' unlettered hind may have
Who, at his toil, hungers for better bread
Than what toil buys; the little child may have
Content to love and trust; all souls shall have
Which, when the light shines, turn themselves to light
As field-flowers do; and, like the flowers of the field,
Are glad of the great sun for the sun's sake;
And, being evil, are for good; being weak
Will give what thews they own for Righteousness,
Will lay what gifts they may at Love's fair feet,
And follow, with quick step or slow,—through faults,
Through failures, through discomfitures, through sins,—
The march of that majestic King whose flag,
Distant and dim, they hail, and with true hearts—
Though will be wilful and though flesh be weak—
Burn to obey. These are Heaven's men-at-arms

In van or rear; informed or ignorant
Of whither battle rolls, and what shall prove
Its issue; and, for them, whether high spoils
Of Victory at last—the Leader's eye
'Ware of their wounds—or some forgotten grave
Where they that gained Him glory sleep unnamed:
Always to orders loyal, standing fast
In what post be assigned; in life and death
Right-minded, but not blameless; loving God
With lowly heart, and earnest, striving soul
Which trusted, seeing darkly; loving man
For brotherhood, and God that lives in man;
Such have the faith, to such is much forgiven.

"It may be there shall come in after days—
When this Good Spell is spread—some later scribes,
Some far-off Pharisees, will take His law,—
Written with Love's light fingers on the heart,
Not stamped on stone 'mid glare of lightning-fork—

Will take, and make its code incorporate;
And from its grace write grim phylacteries
To deck the head of dressed Authority;
And from its golden mysteries forge keys
To jingle in the belt of pious pride;
And change its heavenly cherishing tenderness
To warrant for the sword, the chain, the flame,
Lending hard Hate the sacred seals of Love,
And crying: 'Who believes not, perishes!'
It may be some that heard Him day by day,
Lacking the ears to hear, or losing hold
Of larger thought—perplexed interpreters—
Shall, in the times to be, do Him much wrong
With right intent; saying our sweet Lord taught
Dark tangled schemes of sad salvation; God
Making Earth ill; which went awry; was lost
For sin; was forfeit to the wrath of Heaven;
Which—for it must exact a victim!—slew
The Son of Heaven Himself, willing and free;

And by His blood, self-shed and innocent,
Washes Earth's sins away, propitiates
That hungry anger of the offended Law.
So I have known some teach—nay, faithful ones—
Reciting solemn sentences, and words
Of sorrowful foretelling, when He knew
How Love, for love of Love, must die, to prove
Love never dies; no more than Heaven extorts
Sin's satisfaction from glad pangs of Love.
Nay! if 'twere John himself should teach such God
And call Him Christ's, I should remember, too,
How,—when John bade Him call down lightning-bolts
Consuming those Samaritans who drave
Him and the Twelve away—He softly spake:
'I came to save men's lives, not to destroy!'
But, if it be; and from His darkest words
This passeth, that, albeit 'God is Love,'
As He did say, this thing was also said:
God, from the Guiltless drew the fine of guilt,

And, in constraining names of 'Just' and 'Good,'
Wrought red injustice, and dealt grievously;
Bethink thee of our race, a chosen race
From ancient days; but swaddled, suckled, nursed
In school of 'sacrifice:' at Passover
Sprinkling our doors with blood; at bearing-time
Buying our leave to enter once again
The Temple-courts, and show a child to God,
With butchery of those two soft turtle-doves;
Their pearled necks bleeding, while the mother kneels.
Also, in Tisri, on 'Atonement Day,'
Our High-Priest, lifting up the Temple's veil,
Walks gory with his dripping knife in hand;
And,—slaughtering the bullock and the ram—
Comes with two goats; and one Jehovah hath
And one Azâzel: winning each by lot
Cast in that shambles. And,—Jehovah's goat—
Rightfully murdered—seven times must he dip

His fingers in the blood, and scatter it
Over the Mercy-Seat. Azâzel's goat,—
Bearing the 'scarlet tongue' between its horns,
And laden with those sins beasts wot not of,—
One leads into the wilderness, to die
Innocent, for the people; die forlorn,
Famished, on fire with thirst, knee-deep in slime
And salt-crusts of the dreadful Sea of Death.
How should we learn, horribly nurtured so,
To cast no blood upon the Mercy-Seat
In this fresh Temple of the living Love?
Oh, Sir! the stream, so clear,—high on the Mount—
Takes colour from the hags and channel-stones
Whereby it hastens to the expectant plains;
And many winding ways this Heavenly flood
Must find, belike, before old Law no more
Stains the new crystal of its purity
With memory of bad, bitter, bloody, shrines
And savage Righteousness, and jealous Jah!

"It may be this shall hap! How should I know?
Yet do we know, who loved and followed Him,
Never such wild words fell from those true lips,
Which would not have the young man call Him good,
Replying, 'None is good! Not one, save God!'
Love's glory—not Love's gore—redeems all Worlds!
The gateway of His Kingdom He did shut.
On them who named His name, but let the sick
Lie helpless; and the naked go unclad;
The fatherless uncared-for; prisoners
Unvisited; the woes begone of Earth
Unsuccoured;—vainly dreaming to love God
Who did not love their brothers; those who held
Talents, and wrapped them in the napkin; churls
Who—pardoned of great debts—took by the throat
A fellow-servant for some little due,
And narrowly exacted *all*; unkind,
Forgetting the Forgiver. But for Faith
Which—if it could—would cling; and—if it could—

Would comprehend; and, comprehending not,
Stumbled, yet loved and strove,—to that He flung
The golden doors wide open, crying: 'Come,
Thrice blessëd of My Father! What ye did,
In that sweet secret doing of true heart,
Unto the least of these My brethren, ye
Have done it unto Me!'

"'Of true heart'—mark!
For, what were wrought in purpose of reward
Though the high goal be Heaven, wins us no Heaven,
Wins wages only of this World and men;
The portion of the hypocrites. To love
Our lovers, and to give to them that give;
And to bestow, and to abstain, for praise,
The sinners do it, and the publicans;
So would He teach. But, in our daily alms
And, in our prayers; to keep them maidenly,
Veiled; making private what poor grace they own,

Holding them secret 'twixt ourselves and Heaven;
Not letting this hand know what that hand doth;
And nowise ever to ask pay for Love,
Since Love is paid in loving. Yet, He taught,
Love could not lose by utmost sacrifice,
Nay, but that gain would come,—must come!—much gain!
And pleasures past all seeing of the eye,
Hearing of ear, imagining of mind
Quickened to topmost fancy. This, for sphere
Of spirit; where the things prepared for us—
Poorly foreshadowed in Earth's happiest Now—
Would daze the heart to know. Still, deem thou not
Our holy Master put the body by
As though 'twere clog and curse! Not mean, nor base,
But of Heaven's best upbuilding is this House
Fashioned for man; the city of nine gates,
Wonderful, subtle, sacred;—to be kept
Fair and well-garnished; graced with ornament

Outside and in; and wardened worthily
That, in its ordered precincts, Angels' wings
May float and fold; and body help the soul
As soul helps body. Never once with us
Scorned He the meats and drinks, sights and delights
Which flesh doth ask: 'Your Heavenly Father knows
Ye need these things,' He said; and ofttimes sate
At wedding-festival and banquet-board.
But, while the kind Earth hath a place for all,
Joys came unsought—He said—to whoso lives
Heedless of joy. 'Love thyself last! Drink deep
The nectared anodyne of selflessness!
Feast full upon the diet Angels eat—
Pity and Help and Vast Compassion! Seek
The pathway of the Kingdom;—finding that
Other things shall be added! Griefs shall come,
Pain, hardships, death, it may be,—on the path;—
Yet turn not back! hand once upon the plough,
Drive the brave furrow forward, eyes intent

On the share's point! trust Heaven for recompense
Forgetting recompense; trust God for due
Of goodly things, and for Soul's due of peace
Foregoing both!' 'Some of you they shall put'—
Spake He—'to death; and not one single hair
Shall perish of your heads!'"

The Buddhist said:

"I hear thee tell me plain how Jesus taught
Life beyond this life, timeless, infinite;
As little parted from the world we see
As daytime is from dream-time, when we drowse,
And think 'tis night, with sunrise on our lids.
Taught that our sorrows are but children's frets
Because there bends, o'er seen things and unseen,—
Swaying that Kingdom, which hath Love for law,—
A Father's hand, bountiful, pitiful,—
Known by the Son's hand, which we reach and touch;-
His true Name being nameless; conquering

Slowly—for reasons—all things to Himself.
Likewise, that whoso will may enter in—
Now and forever—to full freedmanship
Of Love's fair Kingdom, having Faith, which is
Not wisdom, understanding, creed, belief,
Nor sinlessness—by Yogis vainly sought
In deedlessness—but earnest will to stand
On Love's side; eager heart to see the Good
And serve the Good, and hail the Light, and help
The spreading of the Light; aiming to grow
'Perfect as He is perfect.' So the dew
Globes on a grass-blade; shaped as is the Star,
Shooting star-rays, obeying starlike laws!
Now do these lucent words kindle a lamp
Brighter than what we took from Buddha's lore;
He bade us spurn Self, set the Self aside—
Ahankara—seek always to sink back
Safe to the Infinite; and, for such end,
Break from the sense, with all its sorceries;

Forego delights, disdain what most men prize,
Life's light allurements, tender things of Time,
Soft lips of love, sweet lisp of little ones
Making heart's music in the house; praise, fame,
Wealth, domination. But thou showest us
The subtle spirit, making good its way
From world of sense and self to selfless world,
Not by hard stress of lone philosophies,
Nor scorn of joys, nor sad disparagement
Of life and living things as shadows vain;
But—nearer road and new!—by heart to see
Heaven closest in this Earth we walk upon,
God plainest in the brother whom we pass,
Best solitudes 'mid busy multitudes,
Passions o'ercome, when master-passion springs
To serve and love and succour. *Ah! the dream!*
Full fair, could it but last in waking hours!
Could men but hear the Angels' song anew,
And learn to sing it, making 'Peace on Earth!'"

"Sir! but it lasts!" she said—"with whoso sees
As we have seen and heard. No dream at all,
But simple, glad, and easy verity!
I pray thee note how He would call Himself
The 'Son of Man.' Is't not the way with Kings
To bear for style and title—first and most—
Their kingdom's name, prouder than crown or ring,
Or high imperial purple? This our King,
Who, had He willed, might sit in majesty
Out of all reach, in court invisible
Of undiscovered Paradise; unmoved,
'Mid Angels and Archangels ministering,
Throned Son of God; with archipelagos
Of orbs for silver islands of His Realm;—
Dwelled, seest thou this, with us in Galilee;
And, lowly, took for Empire 'Men,' a Man?
Consider what it is that He was Man!
If one proclaimed—the wisest and the best

That ever lived in all our lands, and years,—
'The way to God is by the road of men;
Find thy far Heaven in near humanity;
Love thy seen brother as thyself! Thereby
Thou lovest Him unseen, Who is the All!'
What answer should we make? Should we not say,
'Some few our eyes have seen, lovers and friends,
Tender and true; once, twice, and thrice we knew
Hearts gentle, just, and pure; and there have been—
If annals lie not—excellent good souls
Giving themselves for kindred, country, right;
Wise teachers, worthy soldiers, foremost minds
Whose names are sweet upon the lips of Time
For service dearly wrought and selfless deeds;
Yet, never was there none might say, at height
Of topmost virtue, "See in *Me* that God
Elsewise unseen! For *My* sake find in Man

Heaven's glory hiding; and for *My* sake love
The least of these My brethren, since the least
Hath God in him—or shall have!"' Oh, our best
Left us still sighing: 'All this petty world
Is full of spoiled and spoilers; strangers, foes,
Hating and hated; rending each from each
By force or fraud the means to live; low souls
Base, void, unlovely! What should make us love
This poor forked fellow-worm, plagued with vile needs,
By savage passions scourged, whose brittle life,
Commenced in helplessness, runs its vain round
Of meats, drinks, sleeping, striving; then sinks back,
Helpless again, to that clay whence he came?
Where shall we find Heaven's image in these brows
Ape-like and low? these faces foul with lusts?
Those hands with guiltless blood dyed red, those eyes

Aflame with greed and anger:—nay, and worse,
Those false, deceiving hearts that cog and cheat,
The smooth, reputed, hypocrites who smile
And, with the serpent's glitter, drag his sting?
What peak, at loftiest, had our breed attained
Where we might stand and see the stars come close?
Where glowed one human glory bright enough
To feed the fond desire, the hopeless hope
That somewhere, at beginning, Man did touch
Divinity; and, somewhere, at his end,
Might pass—a purged thing—to the Infinite?

"This hath my Lord and Master satisfied!
This, from the mouths of doubters and unfaith,
Forever hath He taken! Ah! the worst,
Th' unworthiest creature of us, crawling Earth,
If he but knew what bliss hath happened here,
What sudden splendour of inheritance,

What unexpected purple, undeserved,
Hath lighted, making him the kith of Kings,
Would lift his head from the life-dust he licks,
And, in the sunshine of new, happy, hope,
Spread jewelled wings of joy—as when we see
The dull grey worm, hid in uncomely shell,
Burst it, and soar a lightsome butterfly
Burning and blossoming, all gold and blue.
I—even I—the wilful one, and wild,
Because He did forgive, because my feet
Are clean with treading in His steps, because
I heard His gracious words; and saw Him live,
And saw Him die, and saw Him after death
Alive, triumphant, Lord of Life and Death;
Come to His Kingdom, and not gone from us:
I—Miriam of Magdala—rejoice
With what exceeding joy thine eyes have marked,
Standing persuaded that no height, nor depth,
Nor present things, nor things to be, nor powers,

Nor pangs, shall separate us from His grace.
And, for myself, and all the Earth, and thee,
Have no grief left, and cannot suffer grief,
Being woman, and my Lord and God a Man.
For, listen yet again! This Godlike one,
This spotless, stainless, sinless, blameless Christ,
Whom none did once convince of one small swerve
From perfectness; nor ever shall!—so strong
The elements obeyed Him; so divine
The devils worshipped; so with virtue charged
The touch of Him was health; so masterful
The dead came back upon His call; so mild
The little children clustered at His knee,
And nestled trustful locks on that kind breast
Which leans to-day on God's—Consider, Sir!
A human heart beat there! a human brain
Pondered, and pitied, and was sorrowful
Behind that sovereign brow. The blood of us,—

Of women and of men—coursed, crimson, warm,
In those rich veins! Nay, and He ate our meats
And drank our drinks, and wore the dress we wore;
And His hair fluttered in the breeze which stirred
Peter's, and John's, and mine. So, now, henceforth
This wonder lasts, that what, in all the worlds,
Was highest, holiest, purest, noblest, best,
More taintless than the Morning-Star, more kin
To Heaven than light of Heaven, or proudest plumes
Of Angel and Archangel—That is Man!
That one supreme, consummate, faultless life,
It was a human life, begun with us,
Continued 'midst us, ended as we end
In woe and weakness, thence emerged to be
A Glory sitting equal in the sky
With God's own glory, everlastingly

That by which we are judged, and that whereby
The race of Man claims place and patrimony;
Oh, more than all! that for whose holy sake,
By whose most sovereign grace, for whose sweet deed
The sins which reddened Earth are washed away
Whiter than wool, the debts which loaded Earth
Are paid by Love's kiss on the lips of Law,
Tenderly silenced. Now, the whole Earth hears
(Or shall hear—surely shall hear—at the last,
Though men delay, and doubt, and faint, and fail)
That promise faithful:—'Fear not, little flock!
It is your Father's will and joy to give
To you the Kingdom!'

"Wherefore, if there live
Brothers too low to love, too base to serve,
Too evil to forgive; if aught in Man
So abject seem and so to brute allied

Nice natures scorn the kinship;—think that Christ
Knew also these, and measured these and made
His daily sojourn 'midst them; and was swift
To succour them and cheer; and bore with them,
Never once holding any lowly soul
Less dear to Heaven than high and saintly souls,
Never conceding once that one stray sheep—
Lean, foul, and fleeceless in the thorns of Sin—
Should die, unfolded, for the safe flock's sake.
Thus, then, weakly I strive to answer thee:
Jesus our Lord hath lived and died and lived;
And, now,—in Suns, and Stars, and amplest Heaven,
When Angels name us they must name Him, too,
Since He was Man—is Man. And for His sake
No more 'tis hard to love what He hath loved,
Nor strange to tread, in footmarks of His feet,
This path which leads, by love of Man, to where—
Through Earthly Service rendered, duties wrought
In meekness, purity, and charity—

Always our Helper, He awaits. Awaits
To tell what best He knew—the secret deep
How the Divine hides in the Undivine,
How near to good is evil. Waits to say:
'Enter ye in, who nursed Me, lying sick,
And fed Me, being hungered; gave Me robes
When I was naked, wiped My tears away
In heavy-hearted days, and pitied Me,
And helped Me, cast in prison with the thieves!'
And, when we answer: 'Oh, dear Lord! but, how
Saw we Thee sick, or hungered, or unclad,
Or sad, or cast in prison?' Christ shall say:
'Inasmuch as ye did it to the least
Of these My brothers, it was done to Me!
Aye! 'twas to Me,—and 'twas to God through Me—
Ye gave that cup of water! I lay sick
With him ye succoured; I was languishing

In prison with the broken hearts ye cheered;
That was My nakedness ye covered up
Clothing My Poor; I was the babe ye fed;
I was that widow whom ye visited;
Share My joy now, who helped My Father then!
Enter ye in!'

"Moreover, Sir! I deem
We are so made we but discern what's high,
What's great, what's noble, what's best worthy love,
When it comes visible, incarnate, nigh:
Beauty were but a name, except it burned
Authentic in red glory of the Rose,
Or in loved form and face desirable:
And Virtue needs must put white raiment on,
And walk in Sight, ere men bend knee to her.
Souls, ere they soar, ask help,—to spread a wing—
From firm ground here; th' ideal real, the d[illegible]m

True in the daylight. But with Christ to love,—
With Him to show us what lay lost in us—
Man by His birth, God by His Deathlessness,—
For His sake all the race of men grows great,
Old laws are spent! what need command us more
With crash of Sinai's thunder, not to rob,
To murder, covet, bear false witness? Those
Were chains for Hatred; Love is done with them!
Love, standing with the children, at His knee,
Spells the new lesson that the neighbour wronged,
The poor left comfortless, the foeman slain,
Were kinsmen used unkindly, lovers lost;
Being one household, with one Father, God,
One eldest brother, Christ. 'How often, Lord!
Shall one offend me, and shall I forgive?'
Asked Peter: 'until seven times?' He said:
'Seventy times seven pardon!'—Not the sin!
He made no peace with that! The pure in heart

Alone see God; and very terrible
Blazed His bright wrath 'gainst all the wrong-doers,
Oppressors of His poor, self-lovers, scribes
Who darken knowledge, sinners loving sin,
Impenitent. But, when he turns, turn thou!
And, if he shall not turn, hate him no more
As though Christ had not come, a second time
To break those Stones of Moses, and to write
On every shard of his enlargëd Law
The new, great, golden statute: WHAT YE WOULD
THAT MEN SHOULD DO TO YOU, DO YE TO THEM!"

"So taught Lord Buddh," the Indian said, "but I
Hail larger teaching here. It shall not be,
Henceforward, that the wise man reins his wrath
For quietness of mind, self-mastery,
Or high disdain of who offends,—being held
Only some shadow in the phantom-nautch

Of Maya, some illusionary show
Of sense-life;—but, because Love's tolerance
Fulfils the law, and self would wrong itself
Hurting the wronger, who is kin to self,
So die all mortal strifes, wars without truce,
Quarrels unreconciled; the cruel feuds
Of house with house, and tribe with tribe, and race
With neighbouring race, nursed darkly in dull veins
And handed down, a bloody heritage,
From age to age. Such ill shall cease, I deem,
Where this ray passeth of the nobler light.
Slowly shall dawn, I think, a broader time
When, punished worst by lofty clemency,
The manslayer shall learn he cannot slay
The slain one's right to pardon, nor Man's right
To pity and to comfort, while we kill.
The oppressor shall not so oppress himself

To shut his soul from share of better things
When justice reigns. Revenge shall sheathe his knife,
Leaving his private grief to public means,
Which, ceasing not to exact, shall know no hate.
Surely, herewith, a new World might begin
From this thy faultless Lord, showing all folk
His brothers; dear, for such high brotherhood,
And for what lurks like Him, hid in their clay.
Love, than Hate mightier, taking happy fire
From thy fair Christ, might kindle as times roll
In crores on crores of hearts,—the beam divine
Of that vast patience which is type of Heaven's,
Sending its sunshine upon good and ill.
Yet one point lacks! There shall not fall, at first,
Great earthly comfort here! Sheep among wolves,
Naked 'mid sharpened blades, His messengers
Must pass; and suffer bitterness; and be
Despised, reviled, brought to the cross and stake;

Losing this sweet seen Earth for Heav'n unseen.
It needed that He showed them,—showed to us—
More than a man may: proved it visible
This hidden World,—where wages shall be paid;—
No sleep, no dream, no mystic cheat to tempt
Souls deathwards, down the narrow Road of Right;
But verity—close, palpable, and clear—
If we had eyes to see,—plain certitude
As solid as the summer's purple grapes,
As rich roast meats; as miser's gold; as lips
Dewed with the honey of youth, rose-ripe and new,
For whose sake lovers let the world go by;
As likely as to-morrow,—not yet come,
But surely coming;—nay, more sure than that,
Since, if such be at all, it is to-day
And all days,—this abiding, fuller Life
Beyond, and round, and in, and under things,
Shut from us now by curtain of the flesh

Whose edge Death lifts. Saidst thou He took Death's place
And pushed the black folds back; and made us known?"

She answered not, but, with obeisaunce, rose;
Passed swiftly through that latticed door which led
From the paved Court into the Women's rooms;
And presently returned, holding the hand
Of a pale Maid, who wore the Hebrew dress
Tsaiph and *Cethôneth*—gown and gathered shirt—
Of fine Egyptian linen; all in white
Girt with an *abnêt* wove in gold and white,
Its tassels threaded pearls; and on her head
The *tsanîph*, tied with pearls. But most you marked
The exceeding paleness of that grave fair face
Which was as if white marble breathed, and had
Black tresses banded on it, and large orbs

Of jetty gems inlaid for eyes; and lips
Carved of faint-coloured coral; and ever pressed
As though they held some secret word to say
And must not part, lest breath of it break forth:
Yet with her pallor, something strange of joy
In the bright glance revealed, and gentle mouth
Where—flitting under subtle-shadowed curves—
A light smile always played, so tender-sad
It seemed to mock at sadness. Calm and soft
Issued the Aramaic of her speech
In salutation, while she bent, and said:
"Peace be with thee!" And the grey Magus stood
Folding his palms across his breast; and gazed
With fear and wonder on her countenance
So secret-full, albeit so fresh and young;
Murmuring: "On thee be peace!"

"It dwells with her
Now, and for evermore"—quoth Miriam—

"Passing all understanding! She hath seen
What none else sees; and journeyed to a Land
Whence none returns, and heard with living ears
What the Dead say; for this is Shélomith,
Whom Jesus raised from death in Galilee,
Daughter of Jair. She lodgeth with us here,
His handmaid, and the friend of all His friends,
Living His Virgin, till He call her hence."

Thereat fell silence, while the Indian sage
Gazed more intent; and Shélomith's great eyes
Roamed, searching in the sky for sights unseen.

Mary went on: "Once, in Capernaum,
He sate at meat with Matthew; and there came
The Rabbi Jair—*Rosh-Hakkenéseth*—Chief
Of synagogue; who fell before His feet,
Beseeching from His love and mightiness
Help for a daughter, twelve years old. She lay

Dying—by this time, peradventure, dead;—
His only daughter, dearer than heart's blood.
And Jesus rose and went; we following.
But, while our throng threaded the long bazaars,—
Woe-begone Jair leading the way; the folk
In booths and shops upstarting, from their trades
And trafficking, to see their Rabbi's hand
Clasped in the Master's, and that hurrying crowd
Gather, from khân and well and synagogue;—
Look! there runs up, wild with *his* grief and speed,
One from the Ruler's house. Tears course adown;
He rends his skirt! he cries: 'The Maid is dead!
Trouble no more the Master!' Rabbi Jair
Beats on his breast, and moans. But Jesus said
'Fear not! only believe! She *shall* be whole!'
And Jair,—drear, gazing on the gracious lips
Which spake such comfort inconceivable—

Came to his gate. By this the wailing women
Screamed round the door, with flutes and drums, and flung
Dust on their heads, lamenting '*Wel-wel-êh!*
Ah, his resource! his glory! Oh, Gazelle!
That shalt not drink our water-brooks again,
Nor leave the lilies fairer for thy feet!
Oh, tender, broken, palm-tree! *Wel-wel-êh!*'
Thou knowest, Sir! how sorrowful is death.
But He, staying their clamour, gently said:
'Weep not! she is not dead; she doth but sleep;
I will awake her!' This they laugh to scorn,
Well wotting she is dead. Then entered He
With Peter, John, and James; and, beside these,
The Rabbi with his wife. Our Shêlomith
Lay on her pallet, white and still as snow,
The grave-cloth bound about her hair; the myrrh
Scattered upon her breasts; her little palms
Pressed meek together; pale lips done with breath;

Worn eyelids, weary with the fever, dropped
Shutting the eyes from life; black lashes laid
Close to cheek's alabaster—surely dead!
Not hearing any more the Father's cry:
'My Shélomith! would I had died for thee!'
Not feeling any more the Mother's tears
Passionate on her brow. But Jesus touched
The chill and stiffening hands; looked steadfastly
In the still face; then giving soft command,
Stronger than Death's, '*Damsel, arise!*' He cries,
'*Talitha, cumi!*' And her spirit came,
And she arose and walked; and ate of meat;
While those around laid hands upon their mouths,
Astonished with a great astonishment."

Anew fell silence, while the Magus drew
Nearer by paces three, to see this Maid
Living, that had been dead, who knew the things

Which no flesh knows, and bore them wistfully
In calm bright eyes, and placid smiling lips.

Then spake he: "Is it lawful if I ask
What memory holdest thou of that black time?"

Shélomith, after pause, replied: "He bade
We should not greatly speak of what was wrought;
And, if I speak, something is wont to fall
Like a thick curtain, shutting off my mind,
With all it knows, from you that know it not.
I pray you give me grace if I speak nought!"

And Mary said: "Beseech you pardon her!
She must not speak! It is not well for Life
To learn too soon the lovely secrets kept
For them that die. Look on her face, and see
What close content, and private peacefulness
Gleam through it from the lighted heart within!

Now hast thou witnessed what thou didst desire,
That other World shown visible and near;
Not sleep; not dream, not cheat, but verity!"

The Indian said: "I worship her, and praise
The greatness of thy potent Lord; and thank
Thy pains. Yet was it very Death, indeed,
Not trance, nor swoon? In closest moments here
Hath she told nought of those new things she saw?"

"Sometimes," Mary replied, "when we have walked
Amid the tombs, or seen go wailing by
The mourners with their painted bier, and noise
Of funeral music, Shélomith will smile
And whisper to herself, in words half-caught,
Dreamily,—comforting the Dead, it seems:
'Thou happy Sister! blessed Brother! safe!
Who will not hear His Voice! And yet, sweet!—
sweet!—

Tender-sweet sounded it, although it called
My spirit back so far! Now, weep not so,
Ye living ones! Ye, too, shall pass! and, then
To grow so new and different!—What is't?
Will men still call it 'dead?' We lie a-bed;
And sleep; and seem, on all our nights, to die;
But the soul wakes, and plays between the bars,
Like a caged bird. Afterwards, body wakes,
And soul's asleep, or hiding! What surprise
For these who go feet foremost to the grave,
To learn the dream was Daytime, Light was Night,
Gliding—soft-gliding—to that greater Life,
Which always was so near;—only a skin
To cast aside, like the enamelled snake,
And then—the fresh gold and the glittering blues!
Dear God! how wonderful those colours were
I had not marked before—and, yet, not new!

Those lands and seas I never saw before,
And, still,—'twas Galilee and Gadara!
Those high kind faces never, surely, known;—
And yet,—I played with them before they 'died'—
Before I 'died!' to find them waiting me,
So many, and so many, and such joy!
So glad and natural!—Till that Voice rang
Gentle and mighty—which all worlds obey—
'*Talitha, cumi!*' 'Come back, Shélomith!'
Then I obeyed, coming reluctantly,
And breathed this Earth again: He touching me!
Oh, Wailers! dance and sing for your wise dead
Who do not listen to '*Alâlalai!*'
Ah, fair Lord! pardon mine unwilling feet!
Still I came back! and I will live, and hush,
Till Thou sayest: 'Talitha!' 'Now, come again!'

"So have I heard her murmur," Mary said.

But, when the Maid—low salutations paid—
Passed once again the latticed door, none spake.
And silently the Buddhist kissed the hem
Of Mary's gown, departing silently.

BOOK VI.

The Great Consummation.

THE GREAT CONSUMMATION.

"If Death"—the Indian said—"be dead, indeed,"—
(That sixth day in the House at Magdala)
"Be dead in knowing that one human soul
Once laid this flesh aside, and went, and came,
Taking it up again;—as she avers
Whose deep eyes stayed my speaking yesterday,
Then am I answered! Then thy Master wrought
Better than Buddh, showing the world beyond
Where men shall find their treasure of good works
Laid up in trust, awaiting; loss made gain;
The Kingdom come, unless, in truth, 'twere dream
Thy Maid had of the marvels and the Voice,
And thy Lord — of His knowledge — spake 'She sleeps'
Such sleep, belike, not life nor death, but swoon—

In some dim region where the dying halt—
As locked the senses of thy Widow's son
In Nain;—unto this wisest Master known
At eye-glance; and He did but break a trance."

"Good Friend! I think Truth was the merchandise
Thy camels toiled to fetch this weary way
From Hind to Jordan," Mary answered him,
"Else were I loath to say what I shall say
Telling thee farther of a living one
Healthful to-day, with colours of quick blood
Ruddying his cheek, and bright hair clustering;
No stronger step on Carmel's steepest side!
No rower on our lake-wave lustier!
Who lay four nights a dead man in the tomb;
But on the Master's call, came forth therefrom
Bound limb and loin with grave-cloths,—hands and feet,—
Forth from the pit, I say, into the Sun—

Bound with those bands, as we had laid him there
Four days before, to moulder with the worm;—
'We!' for this dead man,—living now, and hale—
Is El' Azar of Bethany, well known
In all these parts—my Brother. And I saw
Those garments of the grave stripped swiftly off,
And what we put there—pale, and cold, and lean,
A body broke by ten days' fever-fits—
Stride over that black threshold, fair and fresh,
Into the daylight, at my Master's word.
Last year he sojourned long in Magdala;
Yet 'tis not well he should be marked! He walks
A wordless, gentle, wistful man, aware
Of more than may be said in any speech;
Not of our world, though in it, well-content
To wait Heaven's way in all things. Time will be
The truth shall widely spread; now it is best
We seal our lips, and watch him silently
Coming and going, manifesting God.

"Yet, for thy sake, I speak,—more freely speak
Because what I must tell thee, at the close,
Of wonder, glory, conquest, comfort, joy
Of Consummation crowned, and passage pierced—
Blissful, triumphant—from high sacrifice
To heavenly peace and confirmation strong,
Destroying Doubt and Death,—cometh more sure
To thee, as heretofore to me and us,
With knowing this. We were in Gadara,
And—I remember—'twas a summer's eve,
Amid the yellow daisies of the Lake
The children gathered round Him, brought from far
Only that He might touch them. 'Twas that hour
When He rebuked His Twelve, saying, 'Suffer
these
To come to Me! the Kingdom is of such!
Who shall receive it as a little child
Entereth therein.' So sitting, with a babe
Asleep upon His breast, and on His knee

One round-eyed 'Angel of the Kingdom,' nursed
Full fatherly:—a shallop drove its keel
Sharp on the tinkling shingle, and thence gave
My Brother to our band. For I had told
At Bethany how great the Master was;
How wise, how holy, how compassionate.
And El' Azar sped, running through the reeds;
And thrust past peasants, mothers, and the Twelve;
And kneeled and prayed: 'Good Master! wherewithal
Shall I gain Life eternal?' Jesus said:
'Call Me not "good!" None is all good save One!
Thou knowest the Commandments'—at those words
Reciting Moses. Quoth my Brother, then,
'All these have I observed from my youth up!'
And Jesus, seeing, loved him; kissed his head
As Rabbis will when scholars answer well;
But bade him go his way, sell all his goods,
And give his shekels to the poor, and buy
Treasures in Heaven. Thereat El' Azar turned

Sad, for he was a Ruler, owning vines,
Milch-kine and olive-yards. Yet, that kind kiss
Lay strong upon him; and he did this thing,
And gave much wealth, and lived for better gold,
And grew the Master's friend, faithful and close,
Ministering, when we came to Bethany.

"Thus fell it;—near to His last Passover—
That El' Azar lay sick; and we did send
Messengers saying: 'Lord! the man Thou lov'st
Lies sick to death.' But, that day came He not,
And that day died my Brother; and next day
He would not come: He had His purposes!
They told us how He said: 'El' Azar sleeps;
I go to waken him from sleep;' and, next,
When one made answer: 'Lord! but if he sleep
He shall do well!' the Master plainly said:
'Our friend is dead: for your sakes I am glad

I was not there, since now ye shall believe.;
Let us rise up and go; and make him live!'

"But we, in Bethany, had borne our dead
Unto his tomb. It was a cavern cut
On the hill's face, with winding steps let down
Into the darkness, to a sepulchre
Hewn chamber-wise out of the vaulted rock.
A great stone *golâl* sealed the entrance-place,
And shut him with his father's bones. Meseems,
When thou didst journey here to visit us,
Coming, by Bethphagë, o'er Olivet—
Near to that point where proud Jerusalem
Burns at the northward bend—all white and gold—
Thy beasts trod by the spot. And, being nigh
The City's gates, many Jews came to us
For friendship, and to mingle tears o'er him.
Suddenly rumour grew the Lord drew near:

My sister rose to seek, and quick returned
Whispering, 'Yea, He is here, and calleth thee!'
And while we hastened—many following us—
She told me, on the road, all which had fall'n;
How she had said—distraught—that, even now,
What He might ask God's power would grant to Him;
How Jesus answered: 'He shall rise again!'
And she had sighed: 'True, Lord! I know, I know!
When end of all things comes; at the Last Day!'
On which He spake;—the words dwell in my heart!—

'I AM THE RESURRECTION AND THE LIFE; HE THAT BELIEVETH IN ME, THOUGH HE WERE DEAD, YET SHALL HE LIVE.

'AND WHOSOEVER LIVETH AND BELIEVETH IN ME SHALL NEVER DIE.'

"Yet, if we understood not? And I fell
At those dear feet with no hope lightening
My heavy-burdened breast. Too late! Too late!
Why had He tarried, only seven leagues off,
Who might have healed; and El'Azar so loved?
'Lord, hadst Thou but been here!' brake from my lips,
'My brother had not died!' Then, as I think,
To see our tears, and all those mourning folk;
And know our lamentation one salt drop
In this World's brimful Sea of misery;
Bethinking how, by night and day; near, far,
Eyes stream, hearts crack, and homes are laid in waste
For terror of this secret-footed Death
Which comes unseen, and slayeth silently;
And hath not answered once, though myriads ask:
'What art thou? Wilt thou give us back our Dead?'

Bethinking Him of this, compassionate,
Folding all human sorrows in His heart,
Our Heavenly Master groaned in spirit; shook,
A-tremble with that Vast Love, gathering
Against His breast all such as weep on Earth.
'Where have ye laid him?' sighed He. When I said,
'Lord! come and see!' the gracious eyes were wet
With tears which comfort all tears.

"Jesus wept.

"So, to the Tomb we came. The grey slab made
Its monstrous door, where tread of guest falls not,
Nor knock is answered, but the Dead within
Keep speechless company, and, in the dark—
With none to visit them save rat and worm;
Nothing befalling but a bone which drops;—

Moulder together, all a-dust and dry;
Saying no word,—disconsolate, undone,
Staring with empty eyes at olive-roots
Whose fruit they used to pluck—for others now!
Saying no word! Husband and Wife and Child,
Brother and Sister,—who were wont to mix
Lips, hands, and hearts in Earth's warm fellowship,
Silent and separate, on noisome beds.
Oh, till He lived did we not dread our Dead
So still, so altered, so unlovely, so——?
Nay! when He spoke: 'Roll Me this stone away!'
My sister sobbed: 'It may not be! dear Lord!
'Tis four days gone! by now he is corrupt!'

"'Roll Me the stone away!' He said again:
'Spake I not unto thee that thou should'st see
The glory of God?' Then, eight young men of thews,
With ox-yokes and the olive-poles, pushed back

The leaning rock; and the black adit gaped
As 'twere the mouth of Tophet, horrible!
The throng drew off; the very sunshine seemed
Loath to re-enter, lighting first two steps
Of the dark stairway, and the hollowed roof
Where a bat clung and cried, and spiders hung
In broken empty webs, and foul flies crept.
Next, Jesus, no more weeping, but His eyes
With pity and love and power irradiate,
Drew close, and set His holy fearless foot
On that grim threshold, and did pray this prayer:
'Father! I thank Thee Thou hast heard Me here!
I know Thou hearest alway; but because
The people standing nigh shall hereby see
That Thou hast sent Me, I did ask, and Thou
Hast answered!' Then from lowest notes, His voice
Rose clear, commanding: 'El' Azar! come forth!'
Cried He, imperious. Oh, and in that gloom

Ensued a stir,—a noise of rustled cloths,—
A footfall on the stairway! El' Azar—
The dead man—cometh forth! Like unto one
Who slumbers in his summer-room, and hears
Commingled with deep happy dreams, a tone
He knows and loves call him to play; and leaps
Upon his feet, and girds his coat, and hastes
With light steps,—laughing—and lids not yet wide;
So *El' Azar! so, half asleep to see,*
Dazed, unexpectant; but alert, aware,
My Brother!—stumbling somewhat for his bonds,
And one free hand fumbling the face-cloth back
To spy the Master,—stepped forth lustily
Glowing with glad new life, wholesome, and fair;
The crimson of his lips and of his cheeks
Full-coloured; eyes *alight, foot firm, voice* strong,
Loud and assured. But we,—all dumb, for fear
And joy and thanks and wonder,—held our breaths,

Not moving, till we heard the Master say:
"'Loose him, and let him go!'"

Next, day by day
She told the story of those later days,
How He did pass unto Jerusalem,
Wending to die, because such death should bring
Fruit of His fair life, and high grace for men.
How, spying the proud City, as He rode
Meek, on an ass, with children for His guards,
And glad hosannahs wakening the hills,
He sorrowed for His splendid murderess
Throned on her rock, crowned with the great white
Dome,
And girt with Kedron and the guardian hills;
Sighing: "Jerusalem! Jerusalem!
Slaying the Prophets, stoning those that come
Messengers to thee! If, in this thy day,
Thou hadst but known!—thou, Zion!—hadst but heard

The things belonging to thy peace! How oft
I would have gathered all thy children in
As a hen clucks her chickens to her wings;
But thou would'st not! And, now behold thy House
Is left unto thee desolate!" She told
How to that House one last sad while He passed;
Sate in the Temple, saw its goodly Courts,
Its nine gates laid with gold; its corner-stones
Rose-red, and white and black, fetched from afar
For Israel's God, each block a desert-crag
Sculptured to beauty; and the golden grapes
Over the golden doors, each shining bunch
The stature of a man; its cedar-work;
Its alabaster stairs; that purple veil
Soon to be rent, shutting the "Holiest" in;
The Ark, the Cherubim with shielding wings·
The vain, void, Altar whence the God was gone.
For, "seest thou these great buildings?" so He spake,
"One stone upon another doth not stand

Of all its stones which shall not be cast down
In times that come!" And, then—amid His friends—
Told she the sojourning at Bethany;
The last sleep on the breast of Olivet;
The treason of the man of Keriaoth,
Selling for thirty pieces that sweet blood
Which buys our bliss; the sad Last Supper set,
Secret and holy, in the City's midst,
Where He did break them bread, and pour them wine,
And wash the feet of all the Twelve—even his
Who must betray Him,—his stained with new dust
Of coming from the house of Caiaphas,
And counting out the shekels. For Love hath
No measure in his magnanimities,
And, "peradventure," Mary said, "even he—
After self-loathing, and Aceldama—
Hath somewhere, by strange grace, some place again,

With bitter heart-pangs purged, near to his Lord ;
Who chose him at the first, and at the last
Washed him, well-knowing of the wicked kiss.
For as the sin so is the suffering,
And Judas needs must ache with Jesus' cheek."
Next, she recited how, that last dread night—
Eve of the Cross—He passed, as all men pass,
Into His anguish—to Gethsemane.
"For, it were not to be a man," said she,
"*If once, and briefly, and with trailing wings,*
Soul did not bid the body fond farewell
At hour when soul comes to the throat, and flits
Glad of past days, and greatly moved to part.
One time must be, in all the lives which live,
When strength sinks into weakness, faith desponds,
And fair hope swoons, and—for a little while—
No star shows where the path winds; not one gleam
From all those promised Angels who have gone,
And know the way and should be there to make

The Valley of the Shadow safe with hands
Familiar, at first touch, in thickest dark.
He, Sir!"—she said;—"ev'n He; for whom rayed
Worlds
Watched, with unwinking silver eyelashes,
That sad night of their little sister-world;
He, who had twenty myriad Shining Ones
With golden plumes at poise, fluttering to fly
Swift—if it might have been—to wipe His brow
Clear of the bloody sweat, and comfort *Him*,
And catch Him to His Kingdom—prayed full sore
The God consenting while the Mortal shrank—
'Abba! all things are possible with Thee!
Sorrowful is My spirit, unto death!
If it may be, let this Cup pass from Me;
If this Cup may not pass away from Me
Except I drink it, let Thy will be done!'

And, afterwards, the Treason;—the foul kiss—

"Hail, Master!"—and the tender answer, "Friend!
Betrayest thou Me with kissing?"—torches' glare;
Swords, staves; as if to take a thief by night—
The Hour, and Power, of Darkness. "El' Azar
Saw all," she said; "he was the 'young man' there
Following for love, wearing that 'linen cloth,'
Whom they did strip and seize." On that, the Priests,
The Sanhedrim, the Judgment,—(all she told
Heretofore unto Pilate)—Pilate's wrath;
The scourge; the mocking purple cloak; the crown
Jewelled with blood; the path to Golgotha;
The cruel Cross (oh, Tree, which made its wood,
Who planted thee? Did birds nest in thy boughs,
And sunshine light thy leaves?)—the cruel Cross;
The savage rending nails; the scroll; the sponge;
The cry "*Eloi lama sabacthani!*"—then,
His death-word, "It is finished," and the death,
And spear-blade deep into His dead side plunged;

And the Centurion, crying: "Verily,
This was a Son of God!"

"Oh! we were fain
For sorrow and for shame"—said Miriam—
"Who stood to see Him die! Never so low
Bowed the bright Sun, stooping to bathe his gold
In whelming waves; never so meek, and lost,
Faded the splendour of the Morning-Star
Before that Morning which it heralded,
As He did humble and abjure Himself—
In moment of arriving majesty—
Consenting on the Cross to hang and die.
Had not seen—did we not know Heaven's might
Servant and succour to Him? plumëd bands
Of Presences invisible, intent,
Upon His lightest sighing, loyally
To go and come, bearing Him embassage?

Oh, measure what a love, if thou canst mete,
The immortal pity of that soul serene,
Pitiless only to its body, firm
To hold it uncomplaining, patient, still,
Close to the Cross; of one mind with the nails,
With the dull senseless wood—for sake of men,
And great salvation of all flesh to be.
Not summoning once, with one swift sinking thought,
The rescue that had rushed on wings of fire
From North and South and East and West, to aid.
Not suffering once—not when the fever raged
Worst in His veins, and thirst blackened His lips,
And those whom He had come to teach and save
Gave Him no better thanks than bitter gibes—
Not suffering Death,—who waited weepingly
For leave to strike—to hasten one small step
Quicker for Him, *than for the thieves* who hung
On either hand! All this to wring no word
From Him most innocent and pardoning

Except the tender mandate, sadly sighed
To Mary Mother, wailing at His feet:
And the sick gasp, 'I thirst!' and spirit's spasm,
'Father! dost Thou forsake Me?' and the cry
Of Victory's anguish: 'IT IS FINISHED!'

"And measure—if the mind can ever mete—
That sorrow of us standing by who saw
Our Master,—Master over Death and Pain,
Lord of all Angels, and all devils—*droop*
Unhelped; we who so loved Him, helplessly
Gazing far-off—held from His bleeding feet
By Pilate's spears, and guards of Caiaphas,
And Roman soldiers casting lots to share
His sacred vestments: Measure what a pang
Tore us, and mocked our faith, and made our hopes
Fall, leaf by leaf; like last leaves, when the blast
Of winter strips the vineyard grey and bare!

Nay, but not mine! Truly I tell you, Sir!
I loved Him so!—I worshipped so! I knew
So well in inmost mind He could not die,
And would not die, and was not less than God;
And should make good to all, in His good time,
The meaning, and the means, and mystery;
And be that King they wrote Him on the scroll;
That while mine eyes ran tears too thick, to see
His dear face, and my fingers clenched themselves
Into my palms, as if they were the nails
Piercing His hands; I went not otherwise
Than full-assured it would be well at last.

•

"Yet, measure—if thy mind can measure this—
How lost we stood, defeated, abject, shamed,
Those Twelve—with Judas one; and all the rest
Fled at Gethsemane—and I; and she
Who bore Him; and the women ministering;
And some poor, few, sad, fearful friends aloof

Afraid to grieve, because of those stern spears;
Shut from the shaking Cross, whispering their woe
Lest Galilæan country tongues bewray,
And they be known—like Peter—for His sheep.
Only this left of those high-nourished dreams
About the times to follow Galilee
When He should sit upon His Kingdom's throne,
And rule the land, and give to Israel—
The Roman Eagles driven screaming off—
Days of King David's majesty again,
Solomon's splendours—more than Solomon's!
Only this left of larger phantasies
When we looked higher—saw Him judging Earth
At God's right hand; aye! by those pleasant fields
Of Dalmanutha, and the green sea-shores—
Drunk, like the children of the Bride-chamber,
With His new wine of love—begged for the seats

This side and that side of His Royalty,
Over the heads of Angels. And now this!
For our King's drink the hyssop on the sponge!
For our King's purple the slow-trickling blood!
For our King's courtiers the writhing thieves
This side and that! for our King's Ministers
Those legionaries with the savage spears!
For our King's praises gibes of passers-by!
For our King's throne the cruel torturing Tree!
We—who in those glad days of Galilee
Left all and followed Him certain and sure
The Angels' song was true, Heaven's joy was come
Visible, lovable, approachable,
In this sweet, well-beloved Son of Man:
That we had seen and heard the Power of God
Made Mercy, made Forgiveness, and made Peace;
And elemental enemies, and Death
Dropping their old ill masks to manifest
All things in all the spheres servants to Him,

Lovers of Man, and secret Ministers:—
We to stand weeping there—His sad, shamed,
Church
The last scorned ruins of the large scheme planned
To take the whole world by the hand of Love,
And make all flesh One Father's family.
Ah, never since tears rolled—since human hearts
Beat quick with hope, to break in black despair,
Lay Love so wingless, Faith so quite forlorn
As that dread day, on guilty Golgotha!"

She paused:—the great drops welling from her
eyes—
But lit behind by such a ray as breaks
Across the April rain, and paints the Bow.

"Yet thou"—she said—"who knowest stars in
Heaven,
Which are not gone because we see them not,

Shalt learn in that dark hour was clearest shown
The eternal lustre of my Lord's sweet Star.

"It was our Sabbath-eve. By set of Sun
Arimathæan Joseph craved and gained
The grace to lay Him in his Sepulchre
Fresh-hewn, where no man ever yet was laid,
Shut in a garden. And did bring Him there
Tenderly taken from the bloody Cross,
Wrapped in fine sindon, and strewn round about
With myrrh and aloes—gifts for burial
From Nakdimon the Rabbi;—as much spice
As should a King's grave sweeten. And they set
A great stone to the entrance of the Tomb.
And I—with one more—watched them set the stone,
But might not come at Him, to make Him fair,
Because a guard of soldiers kept the place;
Also, it was the Sabbath.

"So night passed;
And all that next slow day; and night, again.

"Then, while the first day of the week was dark,
Alone I wended to His Sepulchre,
Bearing fair water, and the frankincense,
And linen, that my Lord's sweet body sleep
Well, in the rock. And, while my woeful feet
Passed through the gate, and up the paved ascent
Along the Second Wall, over the Hill,
Into that Garden, hard by Golgotha,—
The morning brightened over Moab's peaks,
Touched the great Temple's dome with crimson fires,
Lit Ophel and Moriah rosy-red,
Made Olivet all gold, and, on the pools
In Hinnom laid a sudden lance of flame.
And, from the thorn-trees brake the waking-songs
Of little birds; and every palm-tree's top

Was full of doves that cooed, as knowing not
How Love was dead, and Life's dear glory gone,
And World's hope lay there in the Tomb with Him;
Which now I spied;—that hollow in the rock
Under the camphire leaves. Yet, no guards there
To help me roll the stone! nay, and no stone!
It lay apart, leaving the door a-gape,
And through the door, as I might dimly see,
The scattered wrappings of the Burial-night,
Pale gleams amidst the gloom. Not waiting, then,—
Deeming our treasure taken wickedly—
I sped; and came to Peter, and to John;
And cried: 'Our Lord is stolen from His grave,
And none to tell where He is borne away!'
Thereat, they ran together, came, and saw;
And entered in; and found the linen cloths
Scattered; the rock-bed empty; and, amazed,
Back to their house they went. But I drew nigh

A second time, alone; heart-broken now;
The bright day seeming blackest night to me,
The small birds mockers, and the City's noise—
Waking within the walls—hateful and vain:
Why should Earth wake, the Son of Man asleep?
Or, that great guilty City rise and live,
With this dear Lord, dead, in her stony skirts?
Fled, too, my last fond hope, to lay Him fair,
And kiss His wounded feet, and wash the blood
From His pierced palms, and comb His tangled hair
To comeliness, and leave Him—like a King—
To His forgetful Angels. Weeping hard,
With these thoughts; like to snake-fangs, stinging me,
My left hand on the stone I laid, and shut
The eager sunshine off with my right hand,
Kneeling, and looking in the Sepulchre.
It was not dark within! I deemed, at first,
A lamp burned there, such radiance mild I saw

Lighting the hewn walls, and the linen-bands;
And in one corner, folded by itself,
The face-cloth. Coming closer, I espied
Two men who sate there,—very watchfully—
One at the head, the other at the foot
Of that stone table where my Lord had lain.
Oh!—I say 'men'—I should have known no men
Had eyes like theirs, shapes so majestical,
Tongues tuned to such a music as the tone
Wherewith they questioned me:—'Why weepest thou?'
'Ah, Sir!' I said: 'my Lord is ta'en away,
Nor wot we whither!' and thereat my tears
Blotted all seeing. So, I turned to wipe
The hot drops off: and, look! Another one
Standing behind me, and my foolish eyes
Hard gazing on *Him, and not knowing Him!*
Indeed, I deemed this was the Gardener
Keeping the Trees and Tomb, so was He flesh;

So living, natural, and made like man.
Albeit, if I had marked—if any ray
Of watchful hope had helped me—such a look,
Such Presence, beautiful and pure; such light
Of loveliest Compassion in His face,
Had told my beating heart and blinded eyes
WHO this must be. But I—my brow i' the dust—
Heard Him say softly: 'Wherefore weepest thou?
Whom seekest thou?' A little marvelled I—
Still at His foot, too sorrowful to rise,—
He should ask this,—the void grave gaping near,
And He its watchman: yet His accents glad;
Nay, each word sweet with secret resonance
Of joy shut in it; and a tender note
Of lightness, like the gentle raillery
Which lovers use, dissembling happiness.
Nathless, not lifting up my foolish head,
'Sir!' said I, 'if 'tis thou hast borne Him hence,

Tell me where thou hast laid Him. Then will I
Bear Him away!'"

"What answer came to that?"
Fetching deep breath, the Indian asked,—

And she—
Her white arms wide outraught—as if she saw
His feet again to clasp; her true knee bent
As He were there to worship; her great eyes
Shining with glow of fearless, faithful love,
As if, once more, they looked Him in the face,
And drank divinest peace,—replied, elate:
"Ah, Friend! such answer that my sadness turned
To gladness, suddenly as grey is gold
When the Sun springs in glory! such a word
As made my *mourning laugh itself to nought*
Like a cloud melting to the Blue! such word
As, with more music than Earth ever heard,

Set my swift dancing veins full well aware
Why so the Day dawned, and the City stirred,
And the vast idle world went busy on,
And the birds carolled, and, in palm-tree tops,
The wise doves cooed of love! Oh, a dear word
Spoke first to me, and, after me, to all,
That all may always know He is the Lord,
And Death is dead, and new times come for men;
And Heaven's ways justified, and Christ alive,
Whom we saw die, nailed on the cruel Cross!
For, while I lay there, sobbing, at His feet,
The word He spake — my Lord! my King! my Christ!
Was my name:

'MARY!'

"If I say the Dead
Catch tone of some such melting tenderness
When first their lovers in the new Life flock

And greet and kiss them, telling them sweet things
Of bliss beyond, and Love-crowned Conqueror;
If I should speak of children, dreaming ill,
And then grown 'ware it is the dear safe breast
Of their fond Mother which they fret upon:
If I should liken hopeless mariners
Snatched sudden from black gulfs; or men condemned
Ransomed from chains, and led to marriage-feasts;—
With the swift comfort of that instant change,
All must fall short! No language had I then;
No language have I now! Only I turned
My quick glance upward; saw —Him—; knew —Him—
sprang
Crying: 'Rabboni!—Lord! my Lord! dear Lord!'

Thereat, within the house in Magdala,
Fell silence,—Mary on her knees at prayer,

Lost for a little unto earthly things;
And he, who came so far, and came so late,
To know what setting had the fair white Star
Seen over Bethlehem—clasping dark palms
Across his breast, and humbly bowed to hail
Her, of all women—after one—most blest,
Most honoured, and most honourable; whose love,
Washing her sins away with holy chrism—
More precious than much spikenard,—won hereby
The first word ever spoke from Heaven's own mouth
Plain to Earth's ears, to tell us Death has died,
And Love shall save all that will trust in Him.

"Oh! thou most happy Lady!"—presently
The Indian said: "I praise and worship thee,
Messenger of thy Master to all Lands!
Surely thy name shall be, in times to come,

Sweet on the lips of all men; and thy sex,—
Thy sisters—lifted into larger grace,
For thy great sake, and for this mighty thing
Done to thy tenderness and constancy—
Laud thee, and joy in thee, who dost make known—
To saintliest souls not less than sinning souls—
The Woman's queenly part in this World's plan!
I do perceive—since Age, which dims the eye,
Opens the inward vision—there shall spread
News of these high 'Good Tidings;' growing gleams
Of this strange Star we followed to the fold.
I do discern that, forth from this fair Life,
And this meek Death, and thine arisen Christ,
Measureless things are wrought; a Thought
born
Which shall not cease to broaden, till its beam
Makes noon of knowledge for a gathered World
Completing what our Buddha left unsaid;
Carpeting bright his noble Eight-fold Way

With fragrant blooms of all-renouncing love,
And bringing high Nirvâna nearer hope,
Easier and plainer! Spake thy living Lord
More than the name? Cam'st thou to touch of
Him?"

Mary replied: "It seems a little thing,
Now,—seest thou,—when so great a thing is told—
That, being a Son of God and Man, He knew
Life's hidden springs, and called the spirit back
At Nain, and after, at Capernaum;
stayed the worm at work in Bethany,
re, for God's glory, He gave back again
ily house, quick-mended, to His friend,
Azar, my brother. But, mark well!
e was the body of the life beyond
shall wear when flesh is laid aside;
unworthy eyes did look upon!
shall see it, save by mystery

Making flesh spirit, or the spiritual
Take fleshly shape awhile.

"When I was fain
To fling my arms around His knees, and pour
My hair upon His feet, and eat, eat, eat
His garment's hem with kissing; measuredly
He stayed me, saying: 'Touch Me not! not yet
Am I ascended to My Father! Go
Speak to My brethren; say that I ascend
Unto My Father, and to yours,—My God,
And your God.'"

"Was He seen again of men?"
The Buddhist prayed.

"*Many whiles!*" answered
"Three times on that First Day, and, afterward
In His old paths by silver Galilee;

And on the Mountain,—where He met His own,
And made them cheer celestial. Last of all
He showed in full midst of Jerusalem,
Amongst th' Eleven,—nail-marks on hands and feet
Rose-red, and spear-gash scarring the white side:
And ate of fish and honey from their board;
Then blessed, and led them forth to Olivet;
And passed—as if they said, a waiting cloud
Receiv[illegible] Him out of sight."

"Centurion!"

[illegible]ndian cried:—"set there to see Him die;—
[illegible]ly the 'Son of God!'"

PEACE BEGINNING TO BE,
DEEP AS THE SLEEP OF THE SEA,
[illegible]HE THE STARS THEIR FACES GLASS
IN ITS BLUE TRANQUILLITY:

THE GREAT CONSUMMATION.

HEARTS OF MEN UPON EARTH,
NEVER ONCE STILL FROM THEIR BIRTH,
TO REST, AS THE WILD WATERS REST,
WITH THE COLOURS OF HEAVEN ON THEIR BREAST!

LOVE, WHICH IS SUNLIGHT OF PEACE,
AGE BY AGE TO INCREASE,
TILL ANGERS AND HATREDS ARE DEAD;
AND SORROW AND DEATH SHALL CEASE
"PEACE ON EARTH AND GOODWILL!"
SOULS THAT ARE GENTLE AND STILL
HEAR THE FIRST MUSIC OF THIS
FAR-OFF, INFINITE BLISS!

THE END.

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